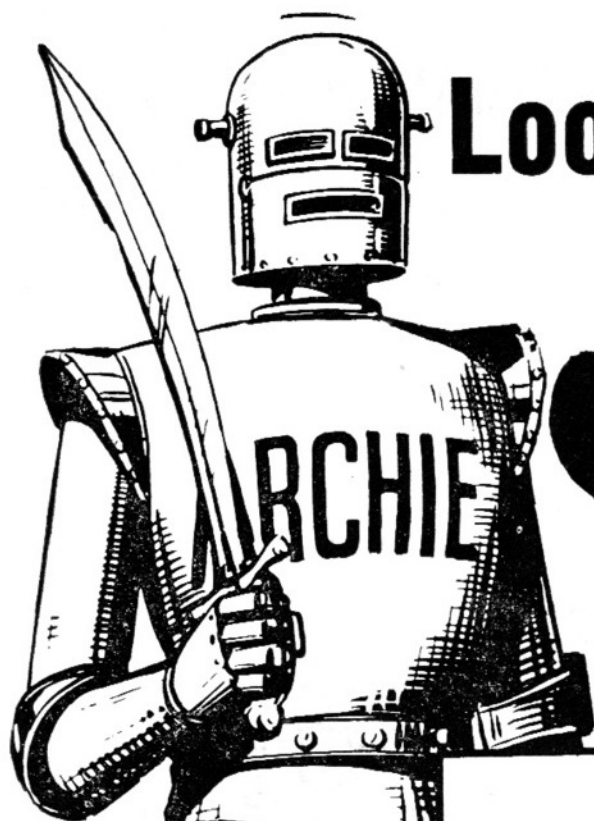


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FIVE STAR WEEKLY

Chapter 1. THEY SHALL NOT PASS

BY NIGHTFALL ON THE 14TH, MAY, THE GERMAN ADVANCE THREATENED TO ENGULF THE ENTIRE FRENCH ARMY. BUT AT ONE POINT, THE GERMANS WERE NOT ONLY BEING HELD, BUT REPULSED -- AND THAT WAS AT LOUVAIN, IN BELGIUM, WHERE THE BRITISH WERE HOLDING THE LINE.



WITH THEIR RIGHT FLANK SUDDENLY IN THE AIR BECAUSE OF THE ENEMY ADVANCE, THE BRITISH RETREATED -- AND SERGEANT CROCKETT WAS AMONG THE LAST OF THE BRITISH INFANTRY TO PULL OUT OF DOOMED LOUVAIN...



COLD STEEL

IT WAS NAPOLEON WHO SAID THAT THE GREAT CAPTAINS OF WAR ARE THOSE WHO TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF ACCIDENTS ON THE FIELD OF BATTLE. THIS IS THE STORY, NOT OF A "GREAT CAPTAIN" BUT OF AN ORDINARY BRITISH SERGEANT -- A TOUGH, HONEST, AND LOYAL MAN, WHO HAD MORE THAN HIS FULL SHARE OF THE ACCIDENTS OF WAR.



IT WAS IN MAY, 1940, WHEN THE ARMoured PANZER DIVISIONS OF GERMANY STRUCK INTO FRANCE FROM SEDAN AND ENCIRCLED THE BRITISH EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

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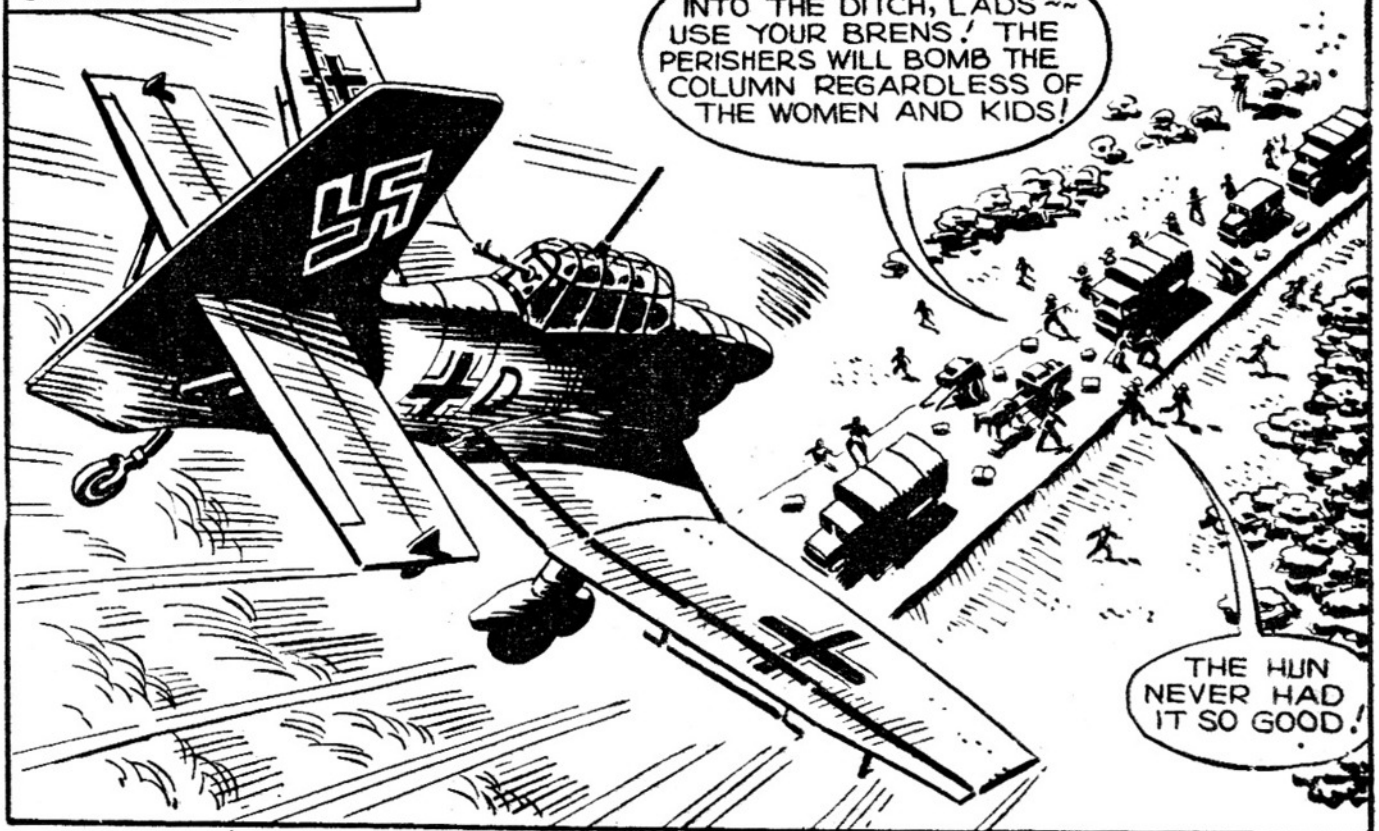
NO 48

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COLD STEEL



THE ROAD TO THE BELGIAN FRONTIER WAS CROWDED WITH FLEEING REFUGEES ~~ BUT THAT DID NOT HINDER THE LUFTWAFFE FROM STRAFING THE RETREATING BRITISH COLUMNS ...



THE BRITISH ARMY, RETREATING NOW ON DUNKIRK, WAS HELD IN A HUGE POCKET, AND HAD CONTACT WITH THE FRENCH ONLY IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF ARRAS, IN THE SOUTH. IT WAS AT ARRAS THAT THE PANZERS VICIOUSLY STRUCK, TO SEPARATE FRENCH AND BRITISH ...



Cold Steel

TWO WHOLE DIVISIONS, AND AN ARMoured BRIGADE, WENT HURTLING HOTFOOT TO ARRAS.

WATCH OUT FOR OUR ARMOUR, GROUP TWO--WE MUSTN'T OVERRUN THEM OR WE'LL GO SLAP INTO THE ENEMY! I CAN'T GIVE YOU THEIR POSITION-- JUST KEEP YOUR EYES PEELED!

RIGHTO, SIR!



AT TWO IN THE MORNING, THE LORRIES CARRYING JOE CROCKETT'S INFANTRY BATTALION SWERVED OFF THE ROAD IN PITCH DARKNESS AND LURCHED ACROSS A FIELD. THEY HAD ARRIVED AT THEIR PLANNED POSITION, TEN MILES TO THE NORTH OF ARRAS, FROM WHICH CAME THE FLASH AND RUMBLE OF GUNFIRE.

DARK AS THE PIT--EH, CROCKETT? GOOD THING--WE'LL SEE THE ENEMY BEFORE THEY SEE US! GET YOUR MEN INTO DEFENSIVE POSITIONS ACROSS THE FIELD--AS MUCH AMMO AS THEY CAN CARRY!



VERY GOOD, SIR!

CORPORAL! UNLOAD THE DIGGING TOOLS!

AS JOE'S COMPANY DUG IN, THERE WAS MUCH SPECULATION AMONG THE MEN ...

WHAT'S ALL THIS
IN AID OF, SARGE?
ARE WE HERE
FOR THE
DURATION?

COULDN'T SAY, CHUM -- 'OURS NOT
TO REASON WHY, OURS
BUT TO DO,
AND DIE!'

THAT'S RIGHT,
SARGE -- ASK A
SILLY QUESTION
AND YOU GET A
SILLY ANSWER!

THE MAJOR HAD POSITIONED THE BATTALION STAFF CARS AND THE RADIO LORRY UNDER A CLUMP OF TREES, WELL AWAY FROM THE ROAD -- AND HE WAS NOW IN CONFERENCE WITH HIS OFFICERS ...

WHAT'S THE SET-
UP NOW, SIR?

GRAVE, JENKINS, GRAVE!
THE TANKS ARE TRYING TO
BREAK THROUGH TO THE FRENCH
AT ARRAS -- BUT THE ENEMY ARE
ATTACKING IN OVERWHELMING
STRENGTH! OUR ORDERS ARE --
THE HUN MUST NOT GET
THROUGH TO DUNKIRK!

Cold Steel

BEFORE TURNING IN FOR THE FEW HOURS SLEEP HE VITALLY NEEDED, MAJOR BARKER WENT ROUND ALL THE DEFENCE POSTS, SAYING WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT TO THE TROOPS -- FOR THAT WAS THE SORT OF MAN HE WAS. AND WHEN HE CAME TO SERGEANT JOE CROCKETT ...

DON'T GET UP, CROCKETT -- I'M JUST GOING THE ROUNDS! WE MAY HAVE A BUSY DAY TOMORROW -- SO GET WHAT SLEEP YOU CAN! I KNOW I CAN RELY ON YOU AND YOUR LADS. MY MOTTO IN ACTION IS --- 'NEVER MIND WHAT IS HAPPENING UP FRONT -- THE

ORDERS YOU HAVE TO OBEY ALWAYS COME FROM *BEHIND!*

SORRY, SIR -- I DIDN'T RECOGNISE YOU!

I'LL REMEMBER THAT, SIR!

AND THEN THE MAJOR HAD GONE -- AND JOE CROCKETT WAS ALONE WITH HIS BREN GUN IN THE DARKNESS ...

HE'S A FINE OLD STICK, IS MAJOR BARKER -- THE SORT WHO GOES INTO THE FRONT LINE WITH HIS MEN, AND STAYS ... THE WAY HE TALKED TONIGHT, IT LOOKS AS THOUGH WE'RE IN FOR A TOUGH TIME!

FIVE HOURS LATER IN THE DAWN LIGHT, JOE AWOKE, STIFF AND CRAMPED, TO FIND HIS CORPORAL AT HIS ELBOW WITH A MUG OF STEAMING TEA ...

WAKE UP, SARGE -- YOU'RE MISSING ALL THE FUN! ANOTHER BRIGADE OF TANKS HAS JUST GONE BY TOWARDS ARRAS! JERRY MUST BE PUTTING ON THE PRESSURE ---

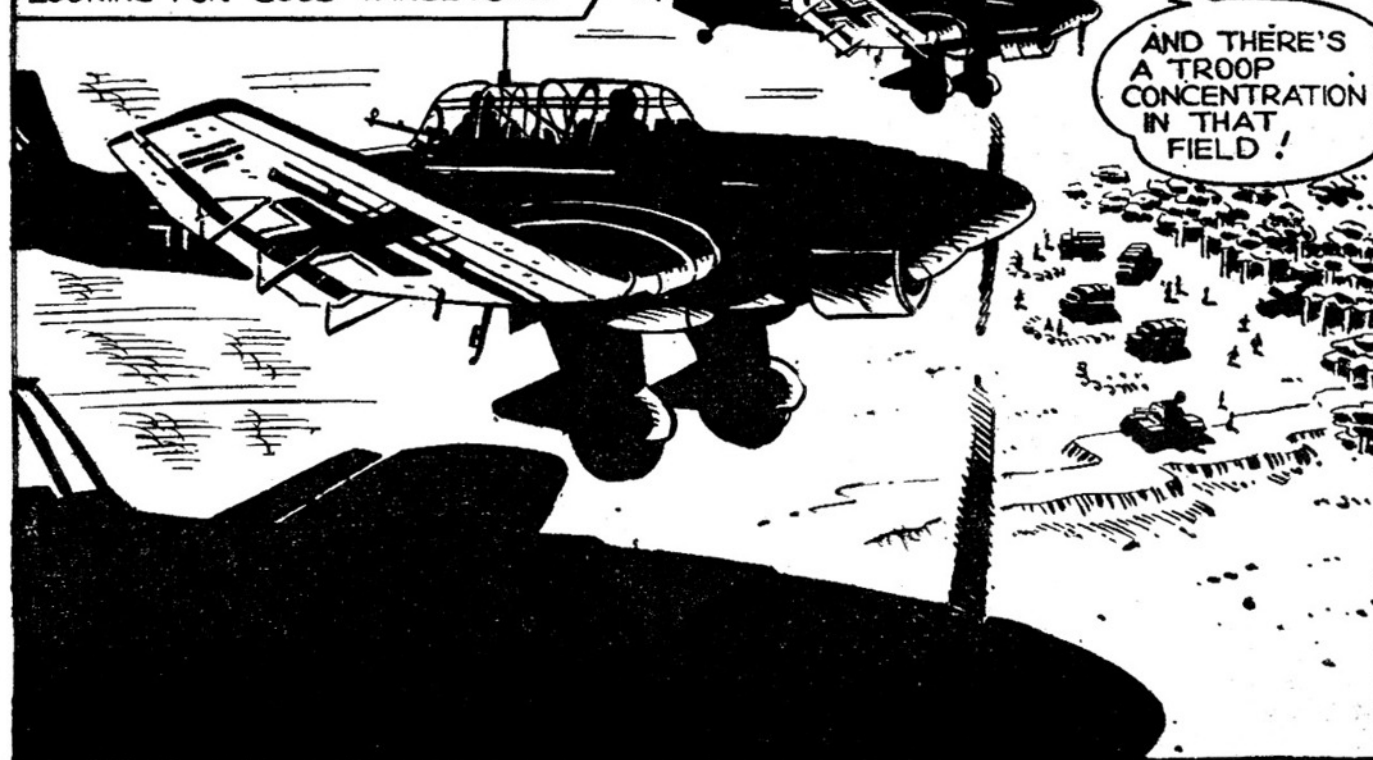
YOU WON'T BE SO BLOOMING CHEERFUL, ALF, WHEN JERRY STARTS PUTTING THE PRESSURE ON YOU!

JOE SAW THAT ON THE ROAD THERE WAS SOME ACTIVITY GOING ON AROUND A BRITISH TANK WHICH LOOKED AS THOUGH IT HAD BEEN UNDER HEAVY FIRE ...



THE BIGGEST TANK BATTLE OF THE WAR, SIR ~ JERRY'S THROWING IN EVERYTHING HE'S GOT ~ BUT WE'RE HOLDING HIM! WE HAD TO PULL OUT OF ACTION BECAUSE OUR TURRET COPPED IT POINT-BLANK!

IT WAS AS THE MAJOR WAS RE-CROSSING THE FIELD TOWARDS HIS STAFF CAR UNDER THE TREES THAT A FORMATION OF STUKA DIVE-BOMBERS CAME ROARING IN FROM THE NORTH, FOLLOWING THE ROAD, AND LOOKING FOR GOOD TARGETS ...



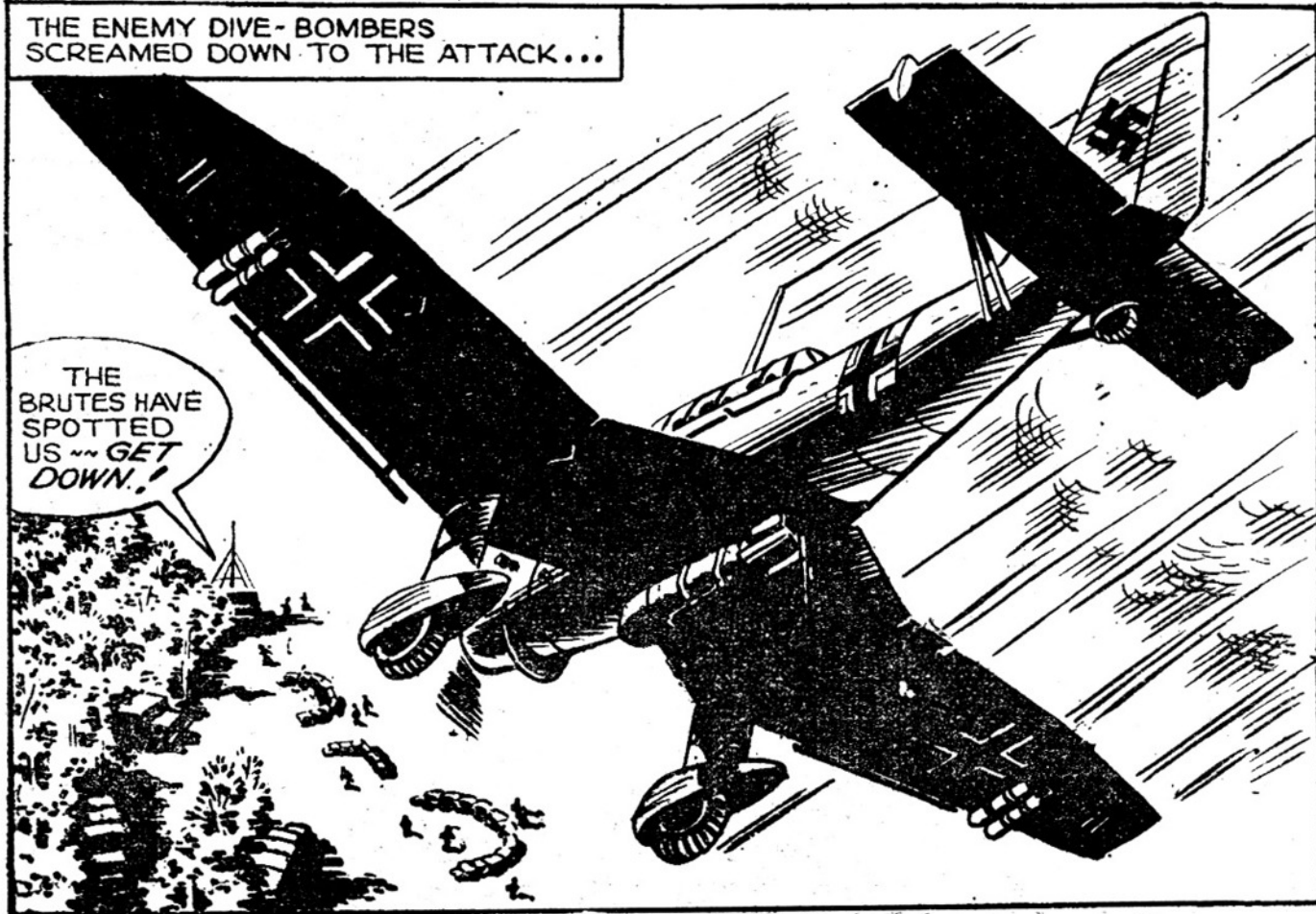
AS THE STUKAS BANKED
ROUND ACROSS THE FIELD,
THE LEADING PILOT SAW
THE CLUSTER OF STAFF
CARS UNDER THE TREES ...

SAVE YOUR BOMBS
AND FOLLOW ME IN ...
I SEE A BETTER
TARGET!



THE ENEMY DIVE-BOMBERS
SCREAMED DOWN TO THE ATTACK ...

THE
BRUTES HAVE
SPOTTED
US ... GET
DOWN!



LOAD AFTER LOAD OF EXPLOSIVE DEATH STREAKED INTO THE TIGHT GROUP OF VEHICLES --AND THE AREA ERUPTED INTO A THUNDERING CHAOS OF FLAME, FLYING EARTH, AND TORN WRECKAGE ...

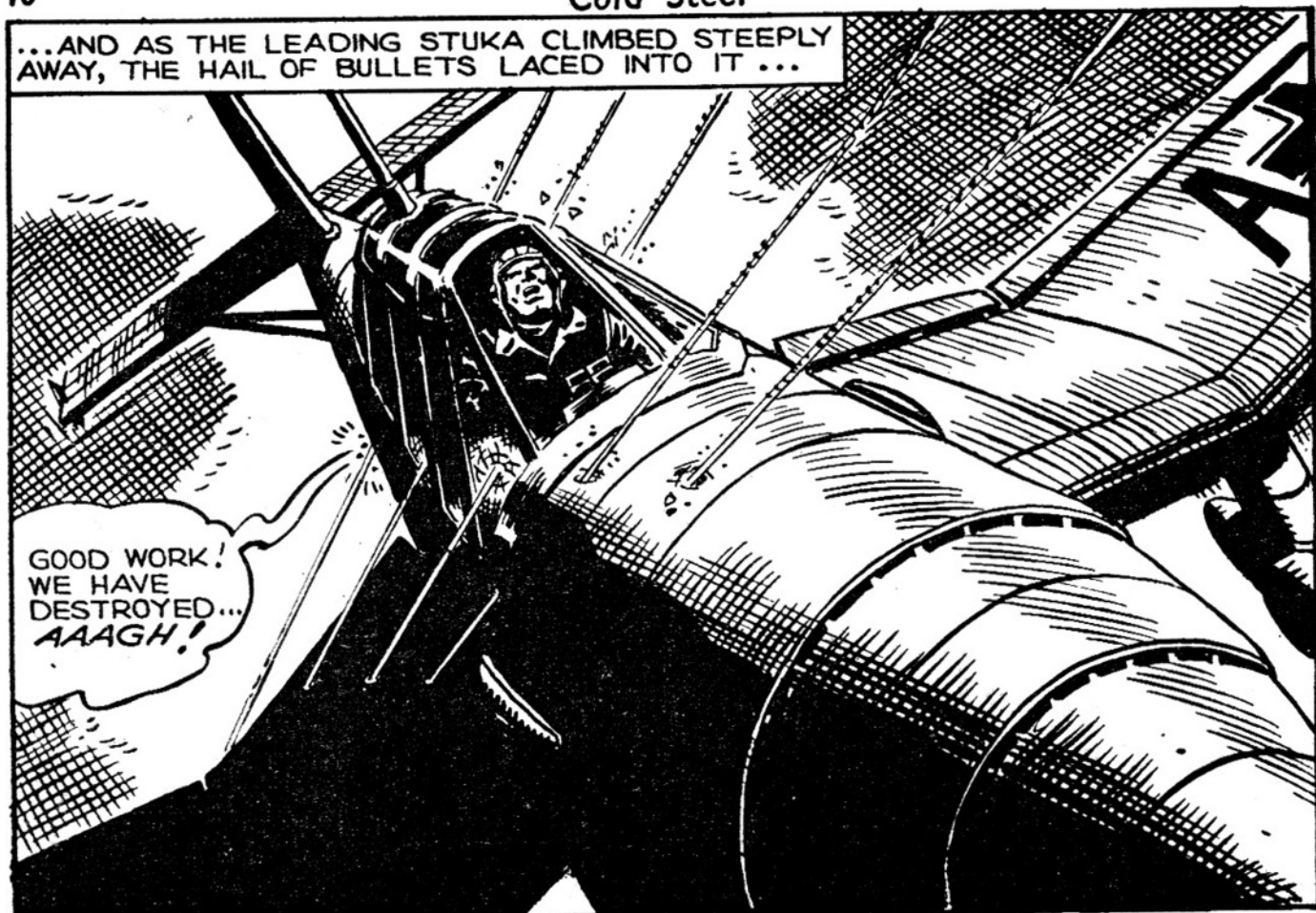
GET
DOWN,
SARGE !

BY HEAVENS,
ALL THE
OFFICERS ARE
IN THAT LOT!

FIERCELY CONTEMPTUOUS OF BOMB-BLAST AND FLYING DEBRIS, THE SERGEANT STOOD UPRIGHT WITH BREN GUN OUT-THRUST, AND FINGER HARD ON THE TRIGGER...

LET'S SEE
IF YOU CAN
TAKE IT --
THERE'S TWO
SIDES TO A
WAR !

...AND AS THE LEADING STUKA CLIMBED STEEPLY AWAY, THE HAIL OF BULLETS LACED INTO IT ...



WITH WAILING ENGINE, THE STRICKEN MACHINE TUMBLED OUT OF THE SKIES ...

GREAT SHOOTING, SARGE!

THAT'LL SHOW THEM!



THE STUKA'S BOMBS HAD DONE TRAGIC WORK. IT WAS SOON EVIDENT THAT NO ONE HAD SURVIVED.

FOUR
DIRECT HITS,
SARGE!

YOU KNOW WHAT
THIS MEANS ~ ~
WE'VE NO OFFICERS,
AND NO RADIO TRUCK!
AND THE BIGGEST
BATTLE IN THE
WAR IS RAGING TEN
MILES AWAY...

JOE CALLED THE OTHER N.C.O.s TOGETHER
FOR AN URGENT CONFERENCE...

THE POSITION, BLOKES, IS THIS!
WE'RE AN ISOLATED GROUP
SITTING AT A STRATEGIC POINT,
WITH ORDERS TO HOLD IT AT ALL
COSTS! WE DON'T EVEN KNOW
WHERE THE REST OF OUR
INFANTRY ARE...

I SAY WE
SHOULD SEND
LORRIES OUT TO
CONTACT THE
NEAREST UNIT!

WHAT'S THE
POINT? WE KNOW
WHAT THE MAJOR'S
ORDERS WERE!

WHAT THE MAJOR
SAID TO ME LAST
NIGHT MAKES IT
CLEAR THAT WE'RE
EXPECTED TO STAY
HERE TO THE LAST
BULLET ~ ~ THAT IS HOW
IMPORTANT WE ARE!
I WON'T ORDER ANY OF
YOU BLOKES TO DO
ANYTHING ~ ~ BUT I KNOW
WHAT I'M DOING! I'M
STAYING PUT UNTIL THE
TANKS REACH US!

JOE'S TOUGHNESS SWAYED THE BALANCE ~~ AND IN A FEW MOMENTS, ALL THE N.C.O.'S WERE FIRMLY WITH HIM ~~ HE HAD BECOME THE NATURAL LEADER. CALLING TOGETHER THE MEN, HE PUT THE POSITION TO THEM ...

... SO IT'S UP TO US TO STICK THIS OUT, AND SEE IT THROUGH! I'M NOT BEATING ANY DRUMS ~~ BUT WE KNOW OUR ORDERS ~~ SO LET'S OBEY THEM!

OKAY,
SARGE ~~
WE'RE WITH
YOU!

WHEN WE'RE
SITTING IN OUR
LITTLE STALAG,
SARGE, LIVING ON
ACORNS, WE'LL
STILL BE WITH
YOU!



FOR THE REST OF THE DAY, THE AREA WAS QUIET ~~ BUT THE RUMBLE AND FLASH FROM THE TANK BATTLE GOING ON IN DISTANT ARRAS WAS INCESSANT AN OMINOUS PALL OF SMOKE NOW HUNG ON THE HORIZON ...

I DON'T LIKE
THE SOUND OF
THINGS, SARGE ~~
THE SHOOTING IS
COMING NEARER!

LET IT COME
AS NEAR AS IT
LIKES, CORPORAL,
WE CAN STILL
COPE!



THERE WERE FEW REFUGEES ON THE ROAD ... FOR IT WAS LITTLE MORE THAN A FARM TRACK, IN OPEN COUNTRY. TOWARDS DUSK, A SMALL BRITISH ARMY LORRY CAME INTO SIGHT, FROM THE DIRECTION OF ARRAS ...



THE LORRY SKIDDED TO A HALT BESIDE THE ANTI-TANK GUNS AND A BRITISH ARMY LIEUTENANT JUMPED OUT ...



TERSELY, JOE EXPLAINED THE POSITION ~~ BUT THE OFFICER WAS IRRITABLE AND DISBELIEVING ...

YOU MEAN TO SAY THAT YOU HAVE **NO** OFFICERS! THEN WHAT ARE YOU DOING SITTING AROUND IN THE COUNTRYSIDE LIKE A LOT OF SHEEP ~~ DO YOU REALISE THAT THE GERMANS ARE ONLY **FIVE MILES AWAY!** WHO **IS** IN CHARGE,?

I AM, SIR!



GAZING CLOSELY AT THE LIEUTENANT, JOE SUDDENLY SAW WHAT HE HAD NOT NOTICED BEFORE IN THE DUSK, THAT THE MAN'S FACE WAS PASTY AND HAGGARD, AND HIS HANDS WERE SHAKING ...

LIEUTENANT! YOU'VE BEEN IN ACTION ~~ THINGS HAVE BEEN TOUGH...

ACTION ~~ **ACTION** YOU CALL IT! TO SIT IN A WIRELESS LIAISON TRUCK WITHOUT EVEN A PISTOL, AND GET **PLASTERED POINTBLANK** BY TWO MARK FOUR TANKS! I HAD THE SENSE TO CUT AND RUN, FOR IT ~~ THE OTHER POOR DEVILS STUCK TO THEIR POSTS!



IT WAS A PATHETIC TALE OF COWARDICE AND DISASTER THAT WAS UNFOLDING. JOE SAW THAT THE MAN WAS SO JITTERY THAT HE COULD NOT HELP BLURTING OUT THE TRUTH ...

LISTEN, SERGEANT -- WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE! THERE'S A GENERAL RETREAT ON -- IT WAS THE LAST RADIO MESSAGE I PICKED UP FROM HEAD-QUARTERS! OUR TANK BRIGADES ARE SMASHED TO PIECES -- I SAW IT WITH MY OWN EYES!

BUT THE GERMANS AREN'T *HERE*, YET, SIR -- SO OUR TANKS CAN'T BE SO SMASHED UP AS YOU THINK! AND WHEN THE JERRIES *DO* REACH HERE, WE'LL STOP THEM -- THAT'S WHY WE'VE GOT GUNS AND AMMUNITION!



JOE AND THE LIEUTENANT WERE STANDING ALONE, WELL OUT OF EARSHOT OF THE NEAREST SOLDIERS ...

SERGEANT, I'M NOT HERE TO ARGUE WITH YOU -- I'M GIVING YOU AN ORDER AS YOUR SUPERIOR OFFICER! I WANT ALL THE MEN IN THIS UNIT OUT OF HERE AND HEADING NORTH TO DUNKIRK -- AND I WANT THEM TO GET MOVING *NOW!*

LIEUTENANT -- WE WERE BROUGHT HERE TO DO A JOB, AND I'M AFRAID WE'VE GOT TO STAY UNTIL THE JOB IS DONE!



Cold Steel



SUDDENLY, THE SERGEANT SWUNG ROUND --AND THERE, A FEW YARDS FROM HIM, STOOD ONE OF HIS CORPORALS...

YOU SAW WHAT HAPPENED, CORPORAL?



THAT'S RIGHT, SARGE -- I NOT ONLY SAW, BUT HEARD! THE LIEUTENANT COMPLAINED THAT HE WAS FEELING FAINT, AND THEN HE SUDDENLY KEELED OVER WITHOUT WARNING!

JOE KNEW THAT THE CORPORAL HAD PROBABLY HEARD EVERYTHING -- AND THE TWO MEN STOOD GAZING AT EACH OTHER IN SILENT COMRADESHIP.

CORPORAL, CAN YOU DRIVE?

IF NECESSARY, SARGE!

THIS OFFICER IS IN NO CONDITION TO STAY AROUND HERE. HE MUST BE TAKEN AS FAR TO THE REAR AS POSSIBLE ... FOR HIS OWN SAFETY. I'M DETAILING YOU, CORPORAL, TO TAKE HIM TO DUNKIRK IN HIS OWN VEHICLE!

TEN MINUTES LATER, THE SMALL LORRY WAS LURCHING OFF NORTHWARD ...

GOOD LUCK!

... AND IF THE STUPID BLIGHTER COMES ROUND AGAIN BEFORE YOU REACH DUNKIRK, GIVE HIM ANOTHER CRACK OVER THE HEAD!



Chapter 2.

ONLY SURVIVOR

THERE WAS LITTLE SLEEP AMONG JOE'S UNIT THAT NIGHT--FOR THE FLARE AND THUNDER OF THE APPROACHING BATTLE WAS NOW BIG IN THE SKY. JUST BEFORE DAWN, THE DEEP-THROATED ROAR OF TANK ENGINES GREW IN VOLUME.

JUST SAY WHEN, SARGE!

WAIT--I RECOGNISE THE TURRET! IT'S ONE OF OURS!



IN THE GROWING LIGHT, THE REMAINS OF A BRITISH TANK BRIGADE COULD BE SEEN SPACED OUT ACROSS THE FIELDS--AND NOW THE SUDDEN RATTLE OF MACHINE-GUN FIRE WAS SHARP IN THE AIR.

BY HEAVENS, AM I GLAD TO SEE YOU, SERGEANT! WE THOUGHT OUR INFANTRY HAD PULLED OUT AND LEFT US IN THE LURCH! JERRY'S ON THE MOVE HALF A MILE AWAY--TANKS, MOBILE GUNS, INFANTRY--THE LOT!

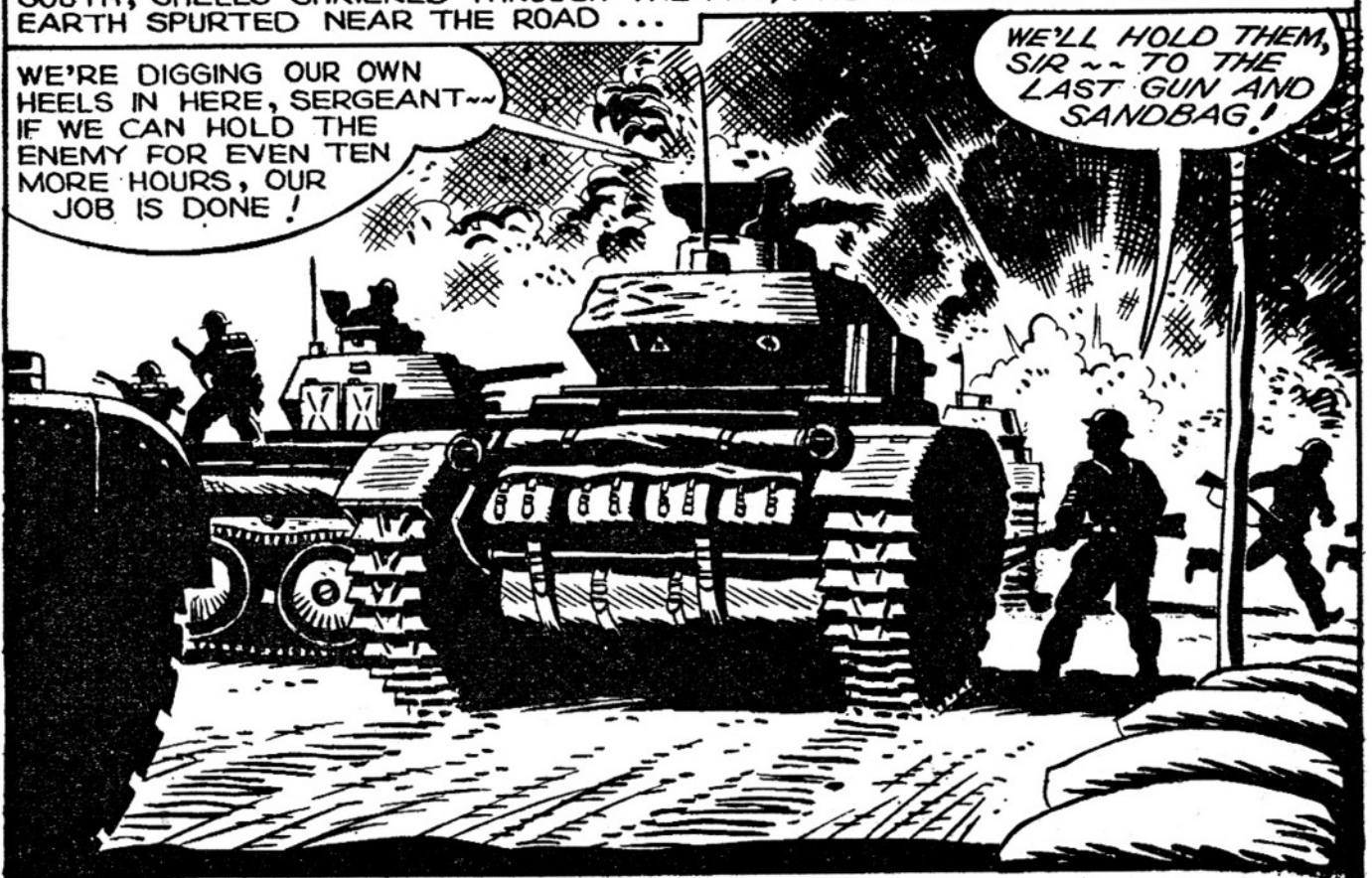


THERE'S A WHOLE BATTALION DUG IN HERE, SIR! STAY WITH US, AND WE'LL PULL OUR WEIGHT!

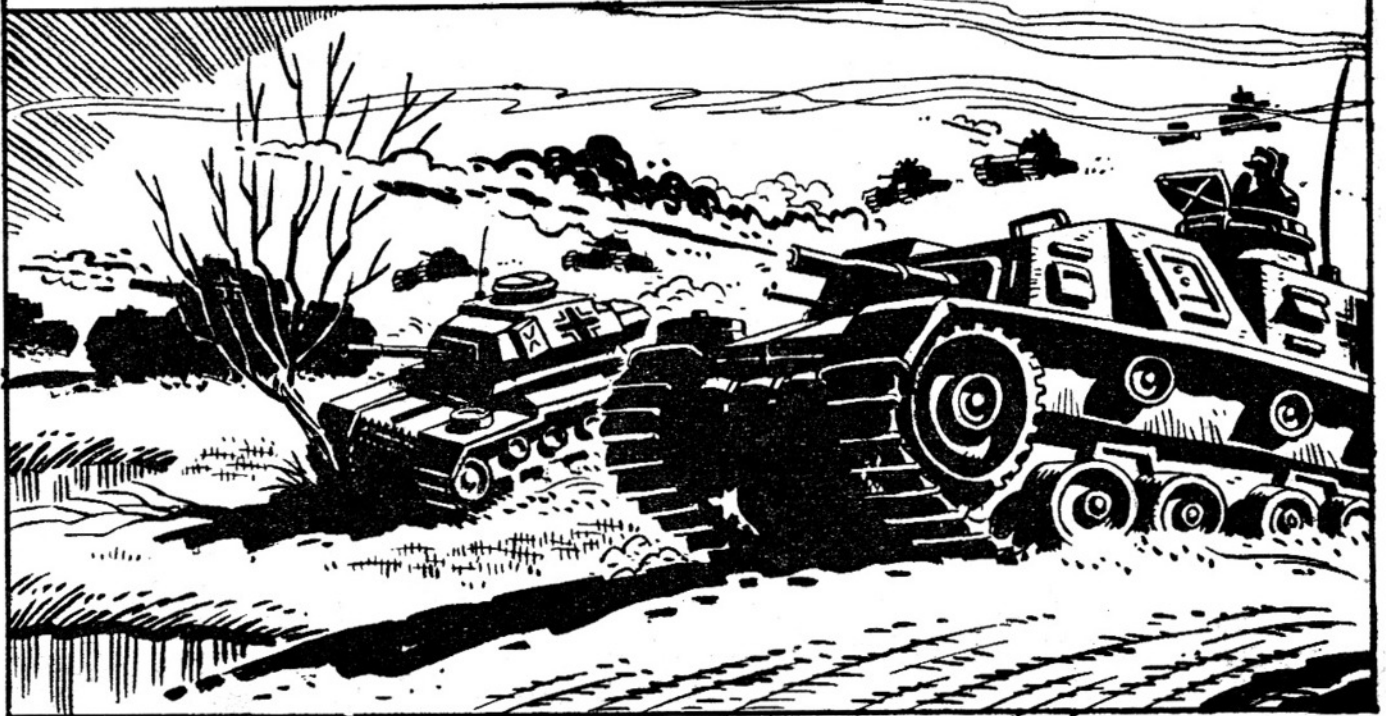
A LINE OF FLASHES SUDDENLY WINKED OUT OF THE LANDSCAPE TO THE SOUTH, SHELLS SHRIEKED THROUGH THE AIR, AND COLUMNS OF FIRE AND EARTH SPURTED NEAR THE ROAD ...

WE'RE DIGGING OUR OWN HEELS IN HERE, SERGEANT~ IF WE CAN HOLD THE ENEMY FOR EVEN TEN MORE HOURS, OUR JOB IS DONE !

WE'LL HOLD THEM, SIR ~ TO THE LAST GUN AND SANDBAG !



IN A FEW MINUTES JOE COULD SEE, STRADDLING THE ROAD IN ECHELON, THE POINT OF THE PANZER SPEARHEAD ~ FIVE ENEMY TANKS, THEIR GUNS FLICKERING CEASELESSLY AS THEY SLOWLY ADVANCED. BEHIND THEM, SPREAD OUT ACROSS THE OPEN COUNTRY, WAS THE MAIN GERMAN ARMOUR ... GREAT FORMATIONS OF TANKS !



AND SO BATTLE WAS JOINED ONCE MORE. FOR THE NEXT TWO HOURS THE MASSES OF TANKS MANOEUVRED AGAINST EACH OTHER, AND THE SWEATING INFANTRY DRAGGED THEIR PRECIOUS GUNS FROM COVER TO COVER, ATTACKING WHERE THEY DARED ...



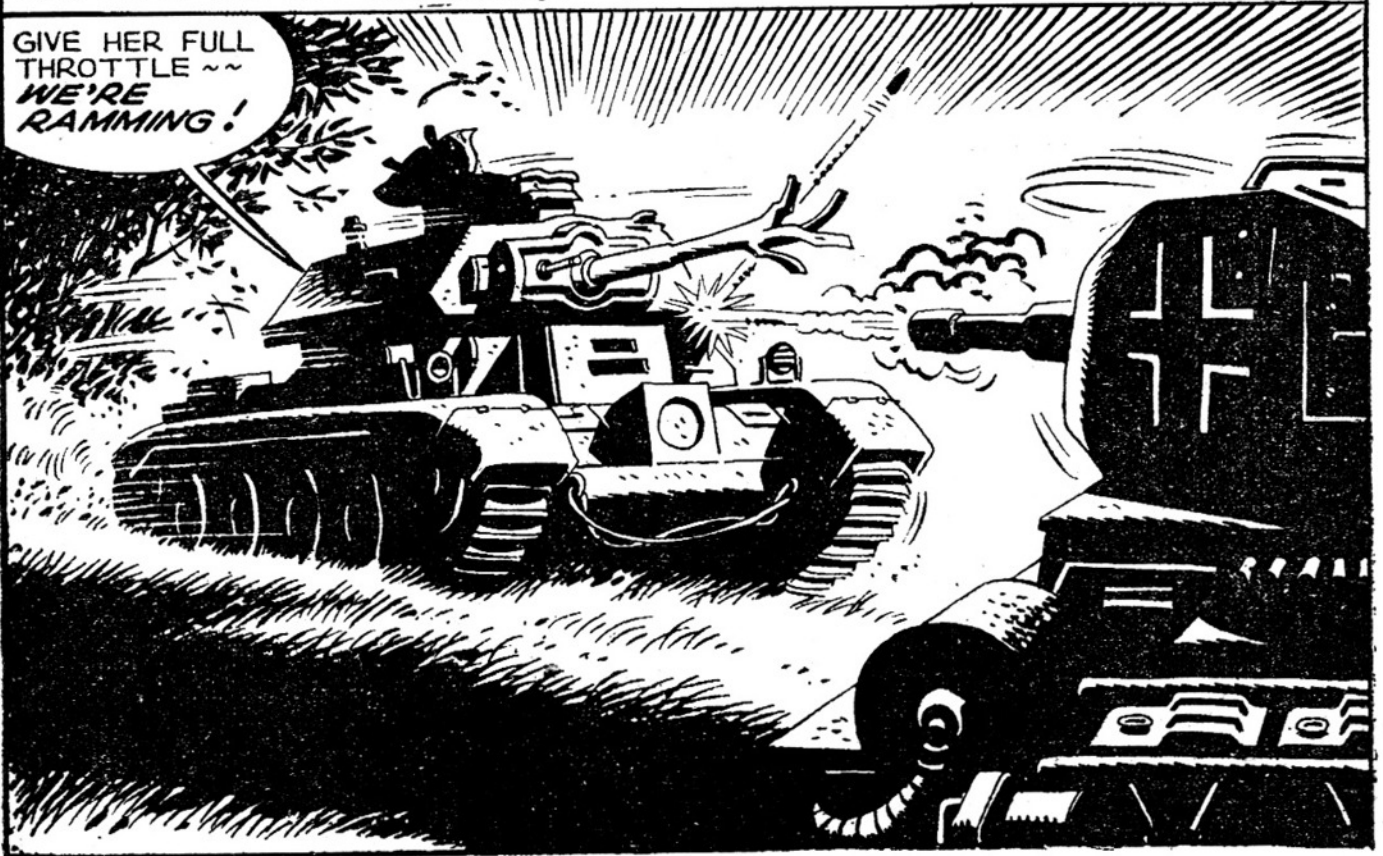
IT WAS A FIGHT FOR THE SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST AS THE GREAT ARMOUR-PLATED MONSTERS GRAPPLED OVER MILES OF COUNTRYSIDE. NEAR JOE'S POSITION, A BRITISH TANK, ITS GUN SHATTERED BY A NEAR MISS, WAS SITTING BEHIND A SCREEN OF TREES.

A JERRY TANK! INTO GEAR, DRIVER, AND CHARGE THE BLIGHTER!



WITH ENGINE THUNDERING, THE BRITISH MACHINE CAREERED VIOLENTLY FORWARD AND AS IT DID SO, THE GERMAN TURRET SWUNG ROUND ...

GIVE HER FULL THROTTLE ~~ WE'RE RAMMING !



THIS ISN'T IN THE BOOK ~~ BUT IT'S DARNED EFFECTIVE !



SWIFTLY, THE BRITISH DRIVER FLUNG HIS DRIVE INTO REVERSE ~~ STOPPED ~~ THEN ACCELERATED FORWARD AGAIN.

I'LL TRY TO PUSH THE PERISHER OVER ON HIS SIDE !



AT THAT MOMENT, SERGEANT JOE CROCKETT CAME DIVING THROUGH THE HEDGE FROM HIS GUN EMPLACEMENT. THE GERMAN TANK SLOWLY KEELED OVER UNDER THE IMMENSE WEIGHT OF ITS ATTACKER ...

KEEP OUT OF THE LINE OF THE MACHINE-GUN -- I'M GOING TO FINISH HER OFF WITH GRENADES!



WITH RECKLESS BRAVERY, JOE JUMPED INTO THE DITCH, ALMOST UNDER THE TRACKS OF THE BRITISH TANK, AND THRUST GRENADES IN THROUGH THE OBSERVATION SLITS OF THE ENEMY MACHINE ...



JOE'S THREE GRENADES EXPLODED ALMOST SIMULTANEOUSLY INSIDE THE DOOMED TANK --AND THEN, AS JOE WAS SCRAMBLING OUT OF THE DITCH



BUT THE ENEMY'S MACHINE-GUN FIRE WAS ALREADY SPURTING INTO THE EARTH AROUND JOE AS HE DESPERATELY DIVED FOR COVER . . .

AAAHH!



MEANWHILE, JOE'S MEN HAD BEEN FRANTICALLY MANHANDLING THEIR GUN ON TO THE CART-TRACK. AT LAST IT WAS READY . . .

ONE FOR THE SARGE!

AND ANOTHER JUST FOR LUCK!



THE ARMOUR-PIERCING PROJECTILES SLAMMED INTO THE HULL OF THE TANK AT ALMOST POINT-BLANK RANGE AND THE STAMMERING MACHINE-GUN WAS SUDDENLY SILENT ...

COME ON, SARGE ~~ TIME YOU WERE OUT OF HERE!



BUT JOE HAD BEEN SHOT IN THE SHOULDER ~~ AND THE CORPORAL, DRAGGING HIM CLEAR OF THE DITCH, SAW HE WAS IN A BAD WAY ...

GET BACK INTO ACTION, CORPORAL, AND LEAVE ME ~~ I'LL BE ALL RIGHT!

NO YOU WON'T, SARGE! YOU'VE STOPPED AT LEAST THREE BULLETS, AND YOU'LL NEED TO GET FIXED UP!



THE BRITISH TANK HAD REVERSED AWAY FROM THE KNOCKED-OUT WRECKAGE IN THE DITCH, AND THE TURRET OPENED ...

HOW'S THE SERGEANT?

I'M ALL RIGHT!

SHOT TO RIBBONS, SIR ~~ BUT STILL THINKS HE'S FIGHTING FIT!

THE WAY HE FIXED THAT TANK WAS ONE OF THE BRAVEST THINGS I EVER SAW!



A FEW MOMENTS LATER,
THE BATTERED TANK
WAS GRINDING ITS WAY
THROUGH THE BATTLE
ZONE ...

THAT PERISHING
CORPORAL ... DID THE DIRTY
ON ME ... MADE ME PULL
OUT LIKE THE YOUNG
LIEUTENANT ...

HE'S DELIRIOUS, SIR ~~~
I'LL GIVE HIM A SHOT
OF MORPHIA FROM
THE EMERGENCY
SUPPLIES .

IF WE MAKE IT, HE'LL
BE THE LUCKIEST MAN
IN THAT WHOLE BATTALION.
JERRY'S COMING IN SO
FAST THAT NOT A SINGLE
INFANTRYMAN WILL GET OUT!

AND THE TANK FINALLY MADE IT CLEAR.
AT LAST THEY REACHED THE BRIGADE
REPAIR SHOP ...

BRING A
STRETCHER PARTY!
WE'VE AN INJURED
MAN IN THERE !

AND SEND US AS MANY
MECHANICS AS POSSIBLE ~~~
WE WANT ANOTHER TURRET!
WE'RE GOING
SOUTH INTO
THE FIGHT
AGAIN !

NO POINT NOW, SIR ...
THE FULL RETREAT IS ON !
YOUR BRIGADE HAS BEEN
CALLED OUT OF THE AREA .
THE TANKS ARE BEING SAVED
FOR THE FINAL STAND
AROUND DUNKIRK !

JOE WAS HURRIED TO A FIELD HOSPITAL, AND HAD THE BULLETS EXTRACTED FROM HIS SHOULDER. THE NEXT DAY, WEAK BUT CONSCIOUS, HE WAS TAKEN BY AMBULANCE TO THE PORT OF DUNKIRK, WHERE HE WAS QUESTIONED BY AN INTELLIGENCE OFFICER ...



THE INTELLIGENCE OFFICER LOOKED GRIM ...

SO THAT'S WHY YOUR UNIT IS STILL IN THE AREA! WE SENT A RADIO SIGNAL TO ALL INFANTRY AROUND ARRAS TO WITHDRAW TO DUNKIRK ON THE FIRST AFTERNOON OF THE TANK BATTLE ~~ BUT YOUR UNIT COULDN'T HAVE RECEIVED IT ~~ YOUR RADIO WAS ALREADY WRITTEN OFF!



GAZING AT THE UGLY RED STAIN ON THE SHOULDER OF JOE'S TUNIC, THE TANK COMMANDER REALISED THAT WHAT THE CORPORAL HAD JUST SAID WAS NOT FAR SHORT OF THE TRUTH...



OBSTINATE AND HALF-DELIRIOUS, SERGEANT JOE CROCKETT WAS MANHANDLED UP AND INTO THE TURRET ...



THE GREAT EVACUATION FROM DUNKIRK WAS ON... AND AS JOE WAS HELPED ON TO THE BEACHES BY A MEDICAL ORDERLY, HIS THOUGHTS REVOLVED AROUND WHAT THE INTELLIGENCE OFFICER HAD SAID...

WE SHOULD HAVE WITHDRAWN... BUT WE DIDN'T GET THE ORDER. A WHOLE BATTALION THROWN AWAY AGAINST TANKS FOR *NOTHING*... AND THE ONE OFFICER WHO *DID* GIVE US THE ORDER TO WITHDRAW WAS *COSHED* OVER THE HEAD BY ME!



THE ONLY MAN IN THE UNIT TO REACH DUNKIRK... THAT'S ME! THE MAN WHO TOOK ALL THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR DIGGING IN OUTSIDE ARRAS... HERE HE IS SAFE AT THE CHANNEL, WHILE THE OTHERS STOOD THEIR GROUND TO THE LAST MAN!



IT WAS FROM THE CROWDED DECK OF A LITTLE COASTAL SHIP THAT JOE HAD HIS LAST GLIMPSE OF FRANCE.

WELL, SERGEANT, THANK HEAVENS THAT LITTLE LOT'S OVER! IF OUR TANKS HADN'T HELD THE ENEMY AT ARRAS FOR TWO CRUCIAL DAYS, JERRY WOULD'VE HAD US ALL IN THE BAG!

YES... OUR TANKS... ARRAS WAS QUITE A SHOW!



Chapter 3. MAN FROM THE PAST

TIME PASSED... AND THE WAR WENT ON. JOE'S WOUNDS HEALED ~ AND HE WAS POSTED AS AN INSTRUCTOR TO ONE OF THE NEW COMBAT TRAINING SCHOOLS. AND IT WAS IN 1943 THAT HE RECEIVED ANOTHER WOUND ~ THIS TIME, WORSE THAN THE BULLETS OF THE ENEMY...

WELL, LADS, I'M OFF ON A FORTY-EIGHT HOURS PASS ~ KEEP YOUR WEBBING WHITE AND YOUR BOOTS BRIGHT!

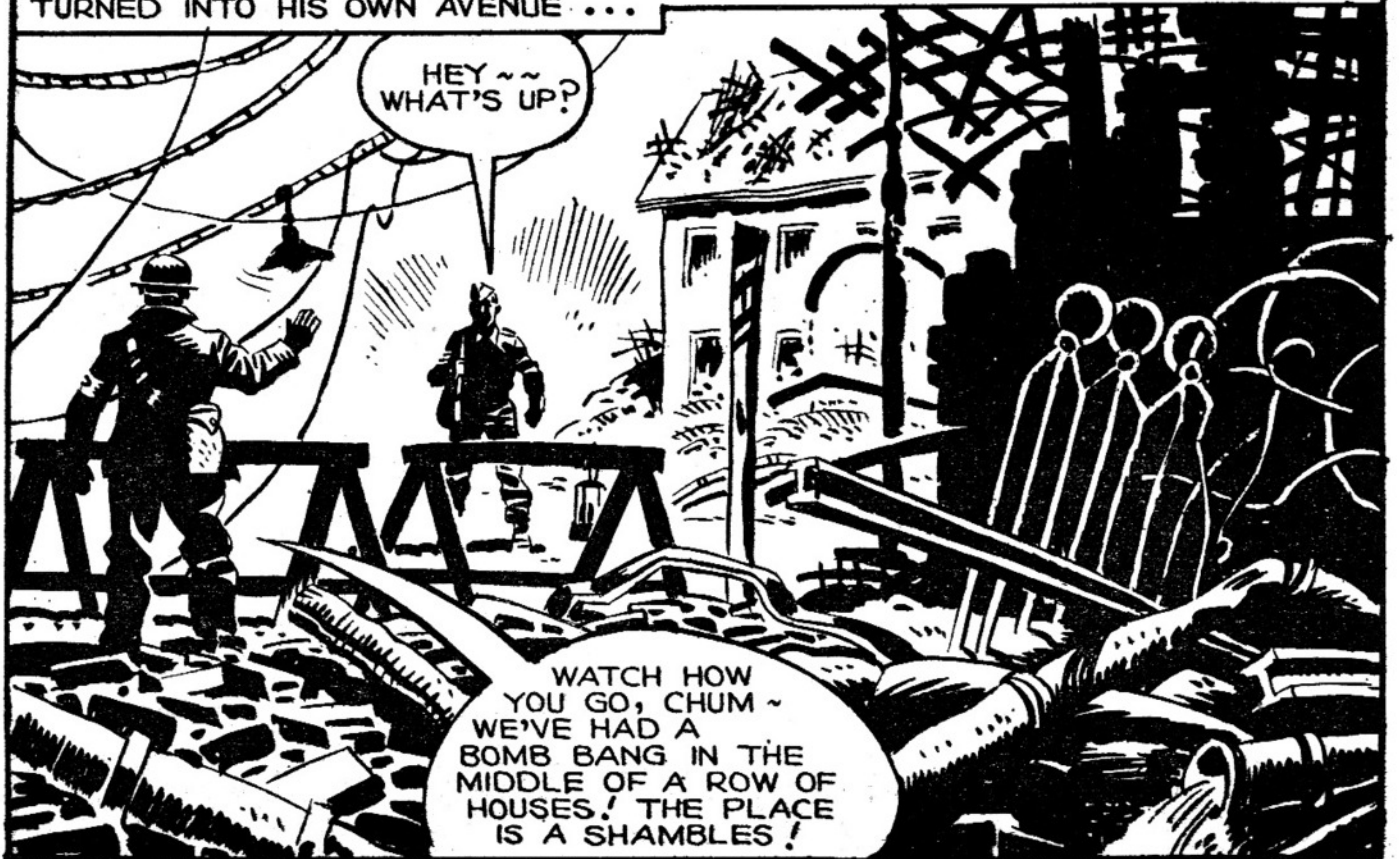
DON'T LET THE ENEMY KNOW YOU'RE IN LONDON, SARGE ~ THEY'LL FIT THEIR BOMBERS WITH BULL-DETECTORS!



JOE'S HOME WAS IN SOUTH LONDON... AND THREE HOURS AFTER LEAVING CAMP HE WAS WALKING THROUGH FAMILIAR SIDE STREETS. BUT AS HE TURNED INTO HIS OWN AVENUE...

HEY ~ WHAT'S UP?

WATCH HOW YOU GO, CHUM ~ WE'VE HAD A BOMB BANG IN THE MIDDLE OF A ROW OF HOUSES! THE PLACE IS A SHAMBLES!



HIS HEART POUNDING IN ALARM, JOE BROKE INTO A RUN... AND THEN HE SAW IT -- THE GREAT SMOKING CRATER, THE MOUNDS OF RUBBLE...

SORRY, SERGEANT -- YOU'D BETTER NOT COME ANY NEARER! THE PLACE HAS HAD A DIRECT HIT, AND WE'RE STILL SEARCHING FOR SURVIVORS... BUT I DON'T THINK THERE'LL BE ANY...

MY HOME... MY WIFE!



AS JOE STOOD THERE DULLY, GAZING IN HORROR, HE WAS JOINED BY A FEW SURVIVING NEIGHBOURS WHO RECOGNISED HIM.



DRIVEN TO THE POINT OF DESPERATION, JOE ROUNDED ON HIS COMMANDING OFFICER ...

LOOK, SIR~~MY DAYS AS AN INSTRUCTOR ARE FINISHED~~YOU CAN TAKE THAT FROM ME! IF I DON'T GET A POSTING I'LL DESERT~~AND THEN YOU'LL HAVE TO DO WITHOUT ME!



BUT JOE HAD GONE TOO FAR ...

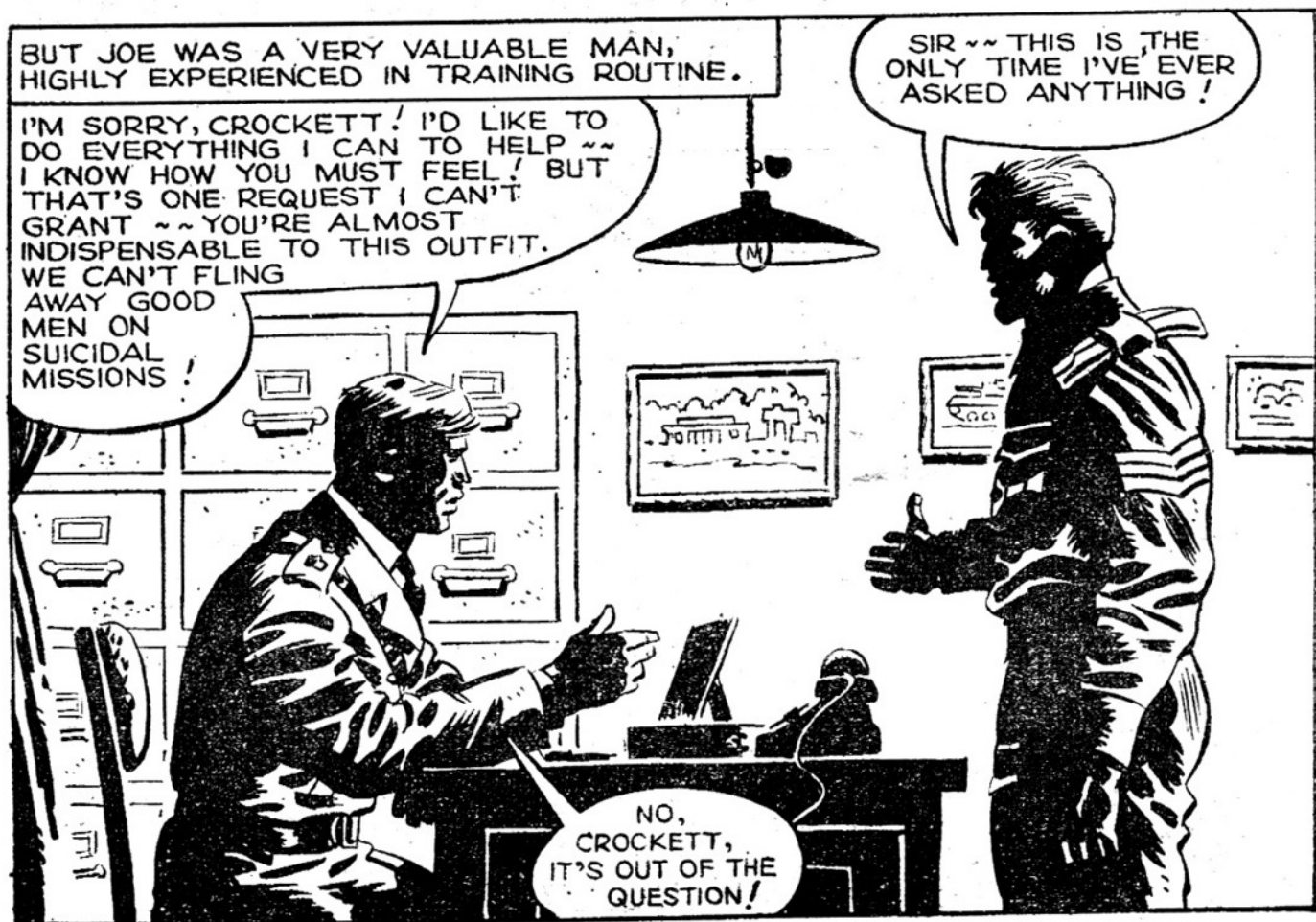
GUARD! GUARD~~PLACE THIS MAN UNDER CLOSE ARREST! YOU'RE GOING TO THE GUARDROOM, CROCKETT, TO COOL OFF!



SO JOE WENT TO THE GUARDROOM. BUT THE COMMANDING OFFICER KNEW HIS MAN~~AND HE KNEW THAT CROCKETT MEANT EVERY WORD HE SAID. REFLECTIVELY, HE PICKED UP HIS PHONE ...

SWITCHBOARD ... GET ME THE WAR OFFICE, WHITEHALL, LONDON...ASK THEM FOR BRIGADIER SYMONS. RING ME BACK AS SOON AS YOU'RE THROUGH...





NEXT MORNING, JOE WAS TAKEN BEFORE HIS C.O.



STRICTLY SPEAKING, CROCKETT, I SHOULD HAVE YOU PUT ON A CHARGE! HOWEVER, I'VE GOT NEWS FOR YOU! WHITEHALL HAVE BEEN IN TOUCH WITH *ME* -- AND IT SO HAPPENS THAT THEY *DO* WANT A GOOD MAN URGENTLY FOR A SPECIAL OPERATION. I CAN'T SPARE ANY OF MY *DISCIPLINED* MEN -- BUT I TOLD THEM I HAD A ROGUE IN THE GUARDROOM WHO MIGHT SUIT THEIR PURPOSE IF THEY KEPT A CLOSE EYE ON HIM!

AS THE TENSION EBBED OUT OF JOE'S GRANITE-HARD FACE, THE C.O. SMILED...

I'M SORRY ABOUT YESTERDAY, SIR -- AND THANKS! YOU CAN'T GUESS HOW MUCH THIS MEANS TO ME!

I CAN GUESS, CROCKETT -- THAT IS WHY YOU'VE GOT THE JOB! NOW OFF YOU GO -- AND THE BEST OF LUCK!



SO SERGEANT JOE CROCKETT WAS APPOINTED TO SPECIAL OPERATIONS. AFTER A DAY OF THOROUGH CHECKING AT THE WAR OFFICE, HE WAS TAKEN ALONG A MAZE OF CORRIDORS TO AN UNDERGROUND ROOM ...



THIS WAS BRIGADIER SYMONS--THE FIREBRAND OFFICER IN CHARGE OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS. IT WAS ONLY WHEN JOE HAD WEATHERED THE BARRAGE OF QUESTIONS TO THE OLDER MAN'S SATISFACTION THAT THE QUESTIONING CEASED ...

LOOK, SIR--IF YOU WANT *REAL* PROOF OF MY ABILITY TO LOOK AFTER MYSELF, CALL IN SOMEONE AND I'LL GIVE YOU A DEMONSTRATION!



IMPATIENTLY, THE BRIGADIER GOT DOWN TO DETAILS OF THE OPERATION, PACING UP AND DOWN THE ROOM AS HE GRUNTED OUT HIS POINTS ...

AS YOU REALISE, THERE'S A BIG PUSH ON IN THE MEDITERRANEAN ~ AND THE ENEMY ARE WONDERING WHERE WE ARE GOING TO STRIKE NEXT! A FULL-SCALE LANDING HAS BEEN PREPARED ~ AND WE HAVE BEEN CALLED IN TO PROVIDE COVER ACTIVITY, SMOKE-SCREENS TO COVER THE REAL OPERATION!



THE BRIGADIER STRODE OVER TO A MAP OF GREECE ...

MAJOR WILDE ~ AND YOU ~ WILL BE DROPPED *HERE* IN THE GREEK MOUNTAINS! YOU WILL CONTACT THE GREEK PARTISANS AND INDUCE THEM TO RISE AGAINST THE GERMANS. WE HOPE THEREBY TO DRAW A GERMAN DIVISION INTO GREECE AWAY FROM NORTHERN ITALY ...



AH, HERE IS MAJOR WILDE NOW ~ PUNCTUAL AS EVER!

JOE SWUNG ROUND TO SALUTE THE MAJOR ~ AND STARED AS IF AT A GHOST! IT WAS THE OFFICER WHOSE ORDER HE HAD DISOBEYED IN FRANCE, THE BATTLE-SHOCKED COWARD HE HAD LAID OUT WITH A REVOLVER BUTT, AND THEN SENT BACK TO DUNKIRK AND SAFETY!



YOU!

MAJOR WILDE ~ THIS IS SERGEANT CROCKETT, THE MAN WHO WILL GO WITH YOU INTO GREECE! HE HAS A DUNKIRK RECORD LIKE YOURSELF, SO NO DOUBT YOU WILL GET ON WELL TOGETHER!

BUT WILDE LOOKED AT THE SERGEANT COOLLY, APPARENTLY WITHOUT RECOGNITION ~~ AND JOE SAW, TO HIS ASTONISHMENT, THAT HE WAS WEARING A D.S.O. RIBBON ...

I'VE PUT CROCKETT BRIEFLY IN THE PICTURE !
HE'S A TRAINED COMMANDO INSTRUCTOR, SO AS
FAR AS HIS SIDE OF THE BUSINESS IS
CONCERNED HE'S RIGHT ON THE BALL !

I'M SURE HE'S A GOOD
MAN, SIR ~~ WHERE WE'RE
GOING, HE'LL NEED TO BE !



FOR THE NEXT HOUR, WILDE AND THE BRIGADIER WENT INTO DETAILS ~~ AND IT BECAME CLEAR TO JOE THAT WILDE NOW SEEMED TO BE A VERY ABLE OFFICER.

...WELL, THAT SETTLES THAT POINT,
SIR ! I HOPE THAT THE SERGEANT
IS TAKING ALL THIS IN ~~ IF
I SHOULD GET CAUGHT BY
THE ENEMY, OR KILLED,
IT'S IMPORTANT THAT
HE KNOWS AS MUCH
AS I DO SO THAT
HE CAN CARRY ON
IN MY PLACE !

IT MUST BE THE
SAME MAN ~~ I COULDN'T
MAKE A MISTAKE LIKE
THAT. BUT HE ISN'T
TALKING LIKE THE
SAME MAN ~~
AND THERE'S
THAT D.S.O.
RIBBON ON HIS
TUNIC !



THEN, AT DUSK THE NEXT DAY, JOE AND MAJOR WILDE BOARDED THEIR AIRCRAFT...

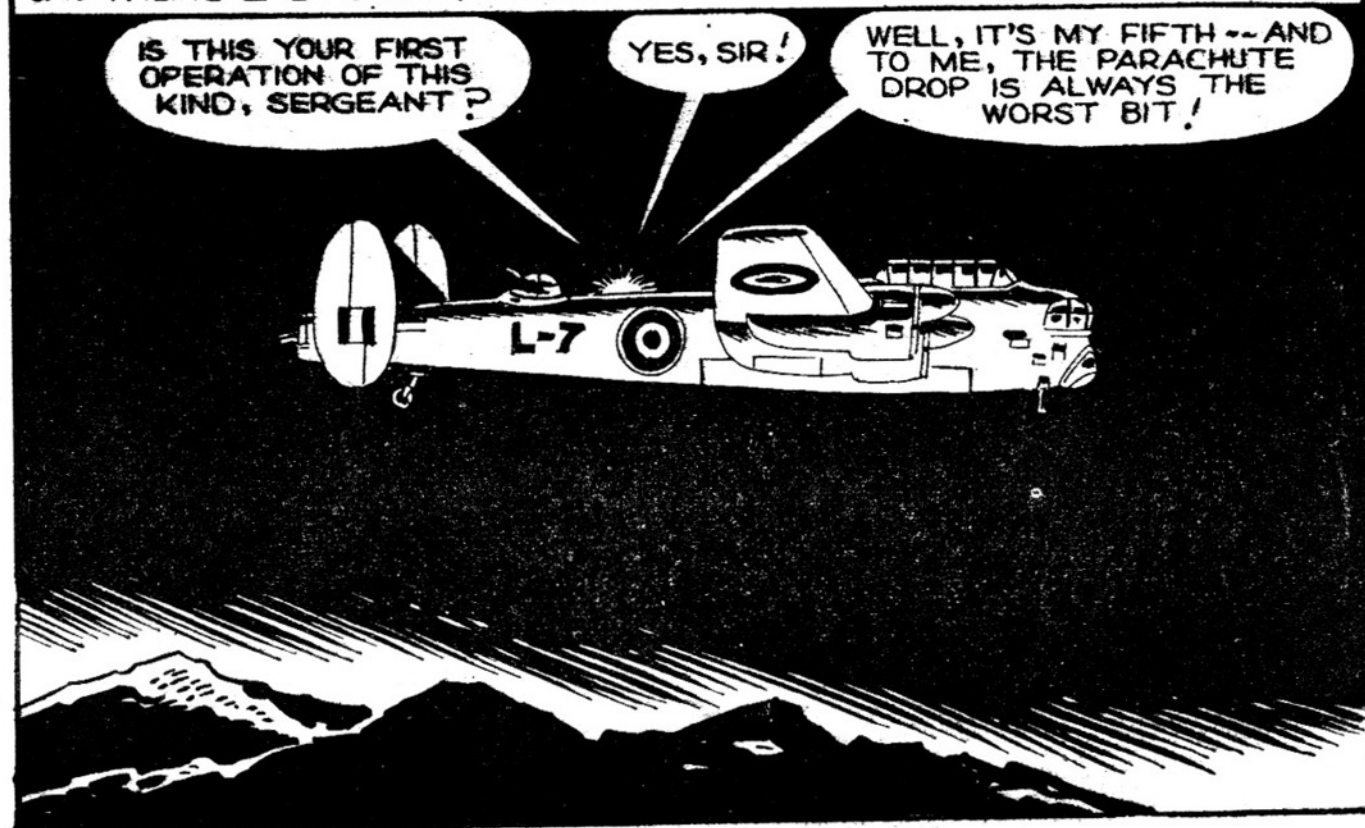


IF YOU'RE READY, GENTLEMEN, WE'LL GET CRACKING!

WELL, SERGEANT, THIS IS IT -- GOT ALL YOUR GEAR?

YES, SIR... STEN GUN, TWO WEBLEYS, TWO GRENADES, AMMUNITION, COMPASS, MAPS, IRON RATIONS -- THE LOT!

THE LANCASTER CLIMBED TO 12,000 FEET, CIRCLING OVER LINCOLNSHIRE BEFORE HEADING SOUTH. INSIDE THE LONG BARE FUSELAGE, JOE AND WILDE SAT FACING EACH OTHER, ALMOST DEAFENED BY THE DIN OF THE ENGINES.



IS THIS YOUR FIRST OPERATION OF THIS KIND, SERGEANT?

YES, SIR!

WELL, IT'S MY FIFTH -- AND TO ME, THE PARACHUTE DROP IS ALWAYS THE WORST BIT!

THE HOURS BEGAN TO PASS ~ AND AS THE GREAT MACHINE THUNDERED ON, HIGH ABOVE THE BAY OF BISCAY, JOE SAT BROODING. HE THOUGHT ABOUT HIS WIFE, AND THE VICIOUS BOMBS OF THE ENEMY ~ THEN BACK TO DUNKIRK. AND SUDDENLY, AS HE LOOKED ACROSS AT WILDE, HE HAD TO SPEAK...

MAJOR WILDE ~ I NEVER FORGET A FACE ~ AND I HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN YOURS! DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN WE LAST MET?

SERGEANT, I'VE GOT A LOT ON MY MIND, AND I WANT TO CONCENTRATE ON THIS OPERATION! LET'S LEAVE THE PAST ALONE UNTIL THIS JOB IS DONE! WHEN IT'S OVER, WE'LL HAVE PLENTY OF TIME FOR OTHER MATTERS!

WILDE WOULD NOT TALK ABOUT FRANCE ~ BUT JOE'S SUDDEN QUESTION SEEMED TO LOOSEN HIS TONGUE ABOUT OTHER MATTERS.

THIS IS A VERY DICEY MISSION, SERGEANT! WE'RE DROPPING INTO AN AREA OF GREECE WHERE THERE ARE THREE PARTISAN GROUPS! THEY ALL HATE EACH OTHER, AND OUR JOB IS TO *MAKE* THEM CO-OPERATE! WE'VE GOT TO MAKE THEM FIGHT TOGETHER FOR A COMMON CAUSE! WE'VE GOT TO STRING THEM ALONG!

SOUNDS LIKE A DIRTY KIND OF CONFIDENCE TRICK TO ME!

WILDE REACTED HOTLY~~ AND JOE REALISED THAT HE TOOK HIS JOB VERY SERIOUSLY ...

IT MAY BE A CONFIDENCE TRICK, CROCKETT~~ BUT IT ISN'T DIRTY! IT'S TIME THESE PARTISANS PULLED THEIR WEIGHT~~ FREEDOM MATTERS AS MUCH TO THEM AS IT DOES TO US! IF WE CAN DRAW A GERMAN DIVISION OUT OF ITALY~~ WE'LL HAVE DONE A GREAT THING!

YES~~ BUT I DON'T SEE HOW WE CAN DO IT~~ WE'VE NOTHING TO OFFER! NO SUPPLIES, NO ARMS, NOTHING BUT TALK...

THE SPOKEN WORD, SERGEANT, IS OFTEN MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD!

WHEN THE LANCASTER LANDED AT AN AIRSTRIP IN NORTH AFRICA TO REFUEL, THE R.A.F. PERSONNEL WERE DISCREETLY CURIOUS ...

IT ISN'T OFTEN THAT A BOMBER CAN BE SPARED TO TAKE TWO MEN ON A ROUND TRIP OF THE MED, MAJOR!

THE TRUTH IS, WE'RE TESTING OUT AIR-SICKNESS PILLS FOR THE MILITARY!

THIS DOESN'T SEEM LIKE THE OFFICER I MET AT ARRAS~~ YET I'M SURE I'M NOT MISTAKEN! HE CERTAINLY STALLED ME IN THE LANC WHEN I TRIED TO RAISE THE SUBJECT!



FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER, THEY WERE HEADING OUT ACROSS THE MEDITERRANEAN TOWARDS THE NORTH-EAST. JUST BEFORE DAWN, WILDE CAME BACK FROM THE CONTROL CABIN, WHERE HE HAD BEEN CHECKING ON THEIR POSITION.



MOMENTS LATER, JOE AND THE MAJOR WERE SITTING ON THE EDGE OF THE HATCH, WAITING TENSELY ON THE GREEN LIGHT FROM THE PILOT ...

YOU FIRST, SERGEANT -- WE'RE DROPPING FROM TWO THOUSAND FEET. A BIT RISKY IN MOUNTAIN COUNTRY, BUT WE DON'T WANT TO DRIFT VERY FAR ~



HARDLY TEN SECONDS AFTER THE JERK OF HIS PARACHUTE OPENING, JOE SUDDENLY HIT THE DIM MOUNTAIN SIDE. STRUGGLING OUT OF HIS HARNESS, HE FLASHED A SIGNAL ...

A CLOSE
DROP, MAJOR!

KEEP YOUR VOICE
DOWN, SERGEANT...
SOUNDS CARRY FOR
MILES IN THESE
MOUNTAINS.



AND THEN ...

THE SERGEANT MAY
SPEAK AS FREELY AS
HE LIKES ~ THERE
ARE NO GERMANS
FOR TEN MILES!

WHAT THE...?

HOLD IT, SERGEANT!
THESE ARE GREEKS...
THEY WERE EXPECTING
US!



IN THE LIGHT OF THE TORCHES, JOE SAW A STOCKY LITTLE MAN WEARING A LEATHER JACKET AND A BERET. BEHIND HIM, OTHERS WERE ARRIVING ...



WITH LEATHER-JACKET IN THE LEAD, THE PARTY WENT UP THE MOUNTAINSIDE, AND AFTER TWENTY MINUTES OF HEAVY GOING, THEY REACHED A DEEP CAVE

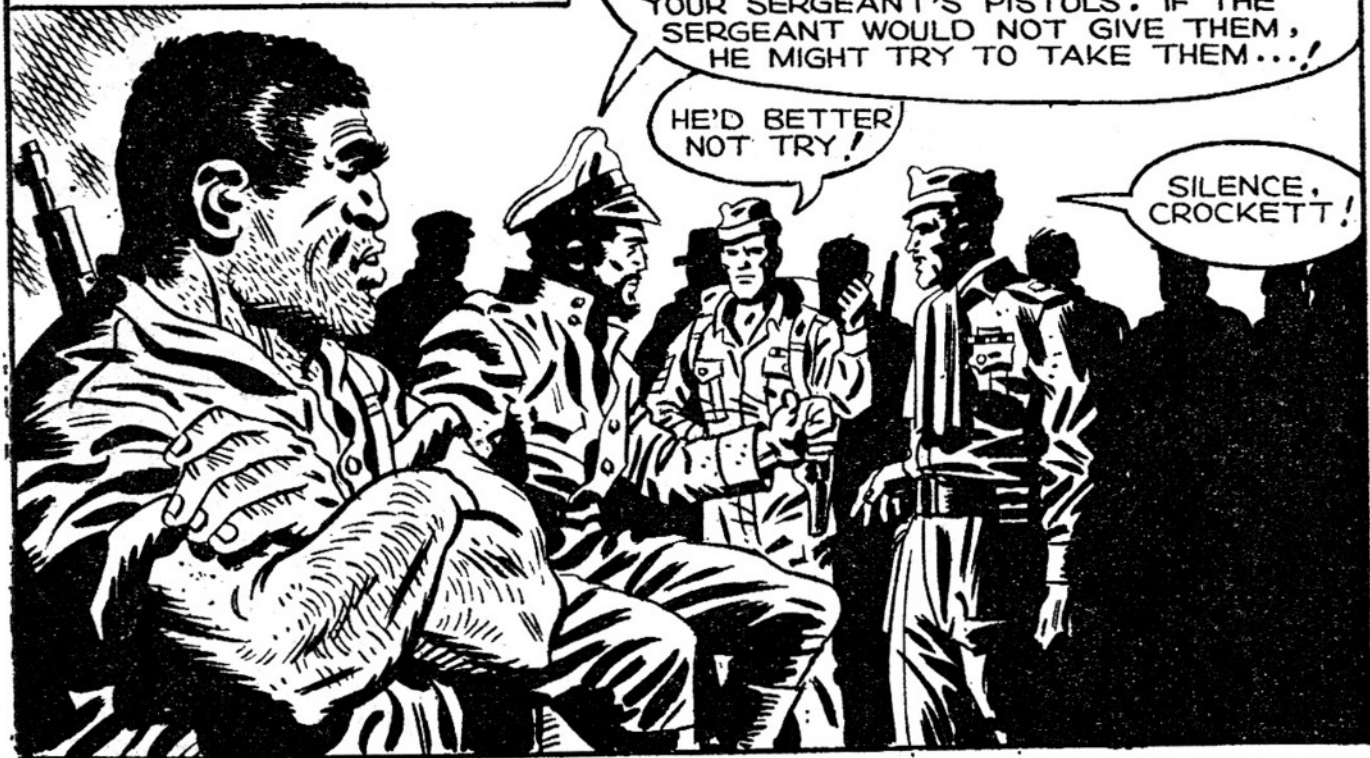


WHILE THE MAJOR AND THEIR LEADER TALKED, THE PARTISANS WERE EYEING JOE'S BURLY FRAME, AND HIS ARMOURY OF WEAPONS, WITH GRUDGING ADMIRATION...

THIS TIME, MAJOR, WE NEED MORE THAN PROMISES! THESE MOUNTAINS ARE NOT LIKE YOUR OWN COUNTRY -- THEY ARE A WORLD OF FORCE! WE HOLD WHAT WE HAVE, AND TAKE WHAT WE NEED! SUPPOSE, NOW, THAT GOURAGOS WANTED YOUR SERGEANT'S PISTOLS. IF THE SERGEANT WOULD NOT GIVE THEM, HE MIGHT TRY TO TAKE THEM...!

HE'D BETTER NOT TRY!

SILENCE, CROCKETT!



BUT WILDE'S SUDDEN WARNING CAME TOO LATE. A TENSE HUSH FELL ON THE CAVE -- AND EVERY PARTISAN LOOKED TOWARDS GOURAGOS...

IS THAT NOT RIGHT, GOURAGOS -- IF YOU WERE **CHALLENGED** TO TAKE THEM -- YOU WOULD **TAKE** THEM!

THAT'S RIGHT!

DON'T WORRY, MAJOR!

FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE, CROCKETT -- **DON'T SHOOT!**



IN DEAD SILENCE, GOURAGOS SHAMBLED UP TO JOE ~ AND THEN, WITH A SNARL, SUDDENLY SWUNG HIS ARM ROUND LIKE A FLAIL ~ **BUT IN THAT INSTANT, THE COMMANDO SERGEANT STRUCK!**

YOU PICKED THE WRONG **MAN**, CHUM!

UUUGH!



A MURMUR OF ASTONISHMENT AND RESPECT WENT UP. GOURAGOS WAS THE STRONG MAN OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD ...

NOW GET ON WITH THE TALKING, POROPOULOS ~ THE MAJOR HAS A LOT OF IMPORTANT THINGS TO SAY!

MAJOR, I CAN SEE YOUR SERGEANT IS NOT TO BE TRIFLED WITH ...



THE INITIATIVE WAS AT THAT MOMENT VERY DECIDEDLY WITH THE BRITISH, AND WILDE SEIZED HIS CUE, LEAPING TO THE ATTACK IN HIS OWN SUBTLE WAY ...

IT IS THE **BRITISH** WHO ARE NOT TO BE TRIFLED WITH, POROPOULOS! THIS TIME I HAVE NOT COME TO TALK TO **YOU** ALONE, BUT TO ALL THE LEADERS ~ I HAVE NEWS THAT WILL MAKE **THEM** JOIN ME ...



RUTHLESSLY PRESSING HIS ADVANTAGE IN FRONT OF THE PARTISAN RANK AND FILE, THE BRITISH MAJOR JOCKEYED POROPOULOS INTO SENDING MESSENGERS TO THE OTHER PARTISAN LEADERS.

I WARN YOU, MAJOR ~ YOU ARE WASTING YOUR TIME! THEY WILL COME TO THE AMPHITHEATRE TOMORROW TO LISTEN TO YOU ~ BUT WE CANNOT UNITE UNTIL OUR DIFFERENCES ARE SETTLED! YOU WILL **NEVER** MAKE ME CO-OPERATE WITH A RAT LIKE STALAKOS ~ OR A COWARD LIKE ANDROPODOS!

WAIT AND SEE, POROPOULOS ~
WAIT AND SEE!



Chapter 4. UNITED IN ACTION

THE AMPHITHEATRE WAS A GREAT CIRCULAR HOLLOW IN THE MOUNTAINS, WHERE THE ANCIENT GREEKS HAD ONCE PERFORMED PLAYS -- AND IT WAS NOW USED BY THE PARTISANS AS A GATHERING POINT. THE FOLLOWING DAY, WILDE AND JOE MADE THEIR WAY THERE ALONE.

THERE IT IS, SERGEANT -- HEWN OUT OF SOLID ROCK, AND BLESSED WITH THE FINEST ACOUSTICS IN THE WORLD! THE PARTISANS ARE ARRIVING IN STRENGTH, I SEE ...

YOU SOUND AS THOUGH YOU'VE BEEN HERE BEFORE, MAJOR!

YES -- I WAS DROPPED HERE ON A FACT-FINDING MISSION A YEAR AGO -- THAT WAS WHEN I FIRST MET POROPOULOS!

THEY WENT DOWN INTO THE AMPHITHEATRE...

LOOKS AS THOUGH EVERYBODY'S HERE, SERGEANT -- I SEE ALL THE LEADERS! NOW WATCH ME DO A CHURCHILL ON THEM -- WATCH ME INSPIRE THEM!

YOU'RE TAKING ON A BIG JOB, MAJOR!



STEPPING OUT INTO THE MIDDLE OF THE ARENA WITHOUT WASTING TIME, THE MAJOR RAISED HIS VOICE AND SPOKE IN FLUENT GREEK. NOW, TO HIS AMAZEMENT, JOE SAW A NEW AND STRANGE MAJOR WILDE ~~ A MAN WHO, LIKE AN ACTOR, TOOK THE CENTRE OF THE STAGE AND COMMANDED ATTENTION.

MEN OF GREECE ~~ **FREE** MEN OF GREECE! I COME AS THE AMBASSADOR OF HIS BRITANNIC MAJESTY ~~ AND I COME WITH NEWS ~~ **GREAT** NEWS ~~ NEWS THAT YOU HAVE WAITED YEARS TO HEAR!





JOE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND GREEK, BUT HE SAW FROM THE TENSE AND EXCITED ATTITUDE OF THE GATHERING THAT WILDE WAS HOLDING THEM SPELLBOUND ...

... SO I TELL YOU, GREAT AND VICTORIOUS DAYS ARE NOW WITH US ... AND THE TIME HAS COME FOR YOU TO PLAY **YOUR** PART! MUST ALLIED SOLDIERS FIGHT **ALONE** ON GREEK SOIL FOR THE CAUSE OF FREEDOM--WHILE THE GREEKS LIE HIDING IN THEIR OWN MOUNTAINS?



CLEVERLY, WILDE REACHED HIS CLIMAX ...

SO LET ALL WHO WILL MARCH **NOW**
AGAINST THE ENEMY, STEP FORWARD
AND STAND WITH ME SHOULDER TO
SHOULDER! ... AND LET THE COWARDS, THE
WEAKLINGS, THE TRAITORS, SLINK BACK
TO THEIR HOLES IN THE MOUNTAINS!

WE'LL STAND
WITH YOU!

... AYE, AND
WE'LL **FIGHT**
WITH YOU!

THE EXULTANT PARTISANS, THEIR PATRIOTIC PASSIONS
INFLAMED, FLOODED AROUND WILDE AND RAISED HIM
SHOULDER HIGH.

WELL, POROPoulos,
ARE YOU WITH US?

YES, MAJOR, I **HAVE**
TO GO WITH YOU, **NOW!**
BUT IF THE BRITISH
DO NOT COME ...

WILDE FOUND THE PARTISAN LEADERS STANDING TOGETHER IN AN UNEASY GROUP...

GENTLEMEN! NOW IS THE TIME TO BURY YOUR DIFFERENCES!

THEY *ARE* BURIED, MAJOR! YOU HAVE INSPIRED OUR MEN IN A WAY THAT *WE* CANNOT... SO NOW YOU MUST TELL US WHAT TO DO!

I WANT YOU TO ATTACK... HIT THE GERMANS HARD... MAKE THEM TREMBLE AT YOUR NAMES!

THERE AND THEN, PORING OVER MAPS THAT JOE PRODUCED, THE PARTISANS ARRIVED AT THEIR FIRST PLAN OF ACTION. TWENTY MILES AWAY, THERE WAS A SMALL TOWN CALLED OLAVENAS, IMPORTANT TO THE GERMANS BECAUSE IT HAD AN AIR-STRIP.

WE WILL SPLIT INTO TWO PARTIES ~~ WHILE ONE ATTACKS THE TOWN FROM *HERE*, THE OTHER WILL INVADE THE AIR-STRIP!

THERE CANNOT BE TWO PARTIES ~~ THERE ARE THREE LEADERS!

POROPOULOS, YOU ARE A DOLT ~~ THE MAJOR WILL LEAD ONE PARTY, AND THE SERGEANT THE OTHER! FORGET YOUR PRIDE FOR ONCE ~~ WE ARE DOING THIS FOR OUR COUNTRY!

THAT NIGHT, AFTER THE VARIOUS GROUPS HAD GONE THEIR DIFFERENT WAYS INTO THE MOUNTAINS TO COLLECT AS MUCH ARMS AND HIGH EXPLOSIVES AS THEY COULD LAY THEIR HANDS ON, JOE SPOKE HIS THOUGHTS BLUNTLY.

I DON'T LIKE IT, MAJOR! FIRST YOU TELL THEM A LOT OF LIES ~ AND THEN YOU SEND THEM TO CERTAIN DEATH! THEY MAY HAVE COURAGE AND ENTHUSIASM ~ BUT THEY HAVEN'T GOT ORGANISATION! THEY'LL NEVER CAPTURE THE AIR-STRIP!



OUR MISSION IS TO **DRAW A GERMAN DIVISION OUT OF ITALY** ~ WELL, WE'RE SUCCEEDING! I BET YOU THAT AT THIS MINUTE SOME DIRTY INFORMER IS SPILLING THE WHOLE STORY INTO THE LAP OF GERMAN HIGH COMMAND. AND THAT'S WHAT WE WANT, ISN'T IT?

AND WILDE WAS MORE OR LESS RIGHT ~ FOR IN OLAVENAS ...

OUT WITH IT, FOOL! ARE YOU TRYING TO TELL ME THAT THE BRITISH ARE PLANNING A LANDING **HERE?**

THAT'S RIGHT, HERR KOLONEL ~ BRITISH OFFICERS ~ **GROSSE** PARTISAN MEETING ~ ATTACK ON AIR-STRIP DAY AFTER TOMORROW. CAPTURE IT FOR BRITISH GLIDER TROOPS ~ WEHRMACHT **CAPUT!**





NEXT NIGHT, THE PARTISANS MET FOR THEIR PERILOUS OPERATION ...



IT WAS JUST BEFORE DAWN THAT JOE AND HIS MEN WERE MOVING FROM COVER TO COVER DOWN THE HILLSIDE OVERLOOKING THE AIR-STRIP, WHEN ...



EVERYWHERE THE SCOUTS PROBED, THE GERMANS WERE DUG IN ~ THE INFORMERS HAD DONE THEIR JOB ONLY TOO WELL. HALF AN HOUR LATER, A COUNCIL OF WAR WAS BEING HELD ...

IT'S SUICIDE, SIR ~ WE'D NEED A TIN-OPENER TO GET THROUGH JERRY'S POSITIONS AT THE AIR-STRIP ~ AND ONCE WE GOT INTO THE OPEN, WE'D BE MACHINE-GUN FODDER!

AND WE'LL NEED A TANK BRIGADE TO GET INTO OLAVENAS ~ THERE'S A HALF-TRACK AT EVERY STREET CORNER! WE'LL HAVE TO THINK THIS OUT!



THE MAJOR AND THE SERGEANT HAD A GOOD LOOK AT OLAVENAS THROUGH FIELD-GLASSES ...

WELL, MAJOR WILDE, WE'VE GOT THINGS **JUST** AS WE WANT THEM! JERRY KNOWS **ALL** ABOUT US -- AND THERE HE IS, JUST WAITING FOR US TO MAKE A MOVE!

"SAVE YOUR SARCASM, CROCKETT -- WE'VE **GOT** TO MAKE A MOVE, OR THE WHOLE SET-UP WILL FALL THROUGH! BUT WHEN IT COMES TO THE POINT, I JUST **CAN'T** HURL THESE PARTISANS INTO A DEATH-TRAP LIKE THAT ..."

AFTER TEN MINUTES, STILL UNDECIDED, THEY WENT BACK UP THE HILLSIDE TO THE PARTISAN LEADERS ...

WHERE ARE THE MEN, POROPOULOS?

IN THEIR POSITIONS, MAJOR, WAITING FOR OUR SIGNAL TO ATTACK! WE HAVE TAKEN THINGS OUT OF YOUR HANDS! WE KNOW THE STRENGTH OF THE ENEMY -- AND WE ARE PREPARED TO MAKE SACRIFICES TO DEFEAT HIM! YOU MAY GO IN WITH US -- OR YOU MAY WATCH, FROM HERE, IN SAFETY.

AS WILDE STOOD, WITH GRIM, SET FACE,
THE PARTISAN LEADER SMILED IRONICALLY.

I HOPE YOU REALISE WHAT YOU
ARE DOING, POROPOULOS!

YOU MADE US A
SPEECH YESTERDAY,
MAJOR ~ AND NOW WE
ARE GOING TO SHOW YOU
TRUE PATRIOTISM IN
ACTION ~ GIVE ME YOUR
VEREY PISTOL!

AS THE GREEN VEREY LIGHT CURVED
UP THROUGH THE COLD MORNING
AIR, THE HILLSIDE WAS SUDDENLY
ALIVE WITH MASSES OF SHOUTING,
RUNNING MEN, ARMED TO THE
TEETH WITH PISTOLS, CARBINES,
SUBMACHINE-GUNS, AND EVEN
SHOT-GUNS ~ **THE ATTACK
WAS ON!**



AND OLAVENAS ITSELF AWOKE TO TERRIFYING LIFE AS THE GUNS IN THE ENEMY STRONGPOINTS HAMMERED OUT. SCYTHED DOWN IN THEIR DOZENS BY THE HAIL OF BULLETS, YET COMING ON IN THEIR HUNDREDS OVER THE BODIES OF THEIR COMRADES, AND STILL ON AND ON, THE PARTISANS WERE A ROARING, SURGING, INDESTRUCTIBLE MASS...



AND ON THE HILLSIDE, AMONG THE TREES, THE ROAR AND DIN OF THE BATTLE STRUCK FIRE INTO THE BLOOD OF SERGEANT JOE CROCKETT...

COME ON, MAJOR-- THIS IS *OUR* SHOW AS WELL AS THEIRS! AND YOU, POROPOULOS-- GRAB A PISTOL! THEY'LL NEED EVERY MAN DOWN THERE!



AND JOE, WITH THE MAJOR AT HIS SIDE, WENT HEADLONG INTO THE BREACH...

THIS IS OUR CHANCE TO *BOOST* THIS SORTIE! LEAVE THE HAND-TO-HAND STUFF TO THE GREEKS--WE'LL STRIKE AT THE ENEMY COMMUNICATIONS! IF WE CAN FIND THEIR RADIO OR TELEGRAPH OFFICE...

...WE CAN SPREAD THE NEWS--IN GERMAN--THAT THE INVASION IS ON! EXACTLY!



THEY FILTERED DOWN THE DEVASTATED MAIN STREET FROM DOORWAY TO DOORWAY, WITH WARY EYES AND EDGY TRIGGER FINGERS ...

WHEN THE HUN COLLECTS HIS FORCES FROM THE AIRFIELD, WE'LL HAVE TROUBLE ... **LOOK, THE TELEGRAPH WIRES!**

THEY LEAD TO THE PLACE WE WANT! YOU'VE HIT IT!

JOE REACHED THE COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE FIRST... HE KICKED OPEN THE DOOR, AND WENT IN WITH STEN GUN BLAZING ...



BUT WHEN THE MAJOR HURRIEDLY JUGGLED WITH THE INSTRUMENTS ON THE LITTERED TABLES ...

THIS STUFF'S ALL DEAD!

TRUST THE GREEKS! THEY'VE PROBABLY ALREADY CUT ALL THE WIRES AND DYNAMITED THE GENERATORS! I TAKE MY HAT OFF TO THEM!



CROUCHING LOW, THE MAJOR SCRUTINISED THE TELEGRAPH MESSAGES THAT HAD BEEN SENT AND RECEIVED PROBABLY WITHIN THE PAST HOUR. WITH DRAMATIC SUDDENNESS HE STRAIGHTENED UP IN EXCITED TRIUMPH, HIS BACK TO THE WINDOW...

CROCKETT! LISTEN TO THIS~~ I'LL TRANSLATE THE GERMAN~~ "WARNING ALLIED INVASION IMMINENT GREECE RECEIVED-STOP- HIGH COMMAND AUTHORITY GIVEN DIVISION ARMOUR AND INFANTRY ON MOVE YESTERDAY ITALY TO ALBANIA-STOP!" YOU KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS, CROCKETT! WE'VE DONE IT~~ IT'S WORKED...



GET DOWN, MAJOR!

BUT AS JOE'S DESPERATE SHOUT RANG OUT, THE WINDOW BEHIND THE MAJOR STARRED IN THREE PLACES...



WE'VE DONE IT...

YOU FOOL... OH, YOU CRAZY FOOL!

AND WILDE PITCHED FORWARD ON TO THE FLOOR.

MAJOR, MAJOR...AND YOU AN OLD CAMPAIGNER! TO MAKE A STUPID, ONE-WAY MISTAKE LIKE THAT!

IT DOESN'T MATTER THAT MUCH, SERGEANT... NOT NOW. WE'VE DONE THE JOB, I TELL YOU... WE'VE... DONE... THE... JOB!



JOE SAW THAT THE WOUNDS WERE BAD... BUT HE SMILED WITH A SHOW OF REASSURANCE.

SO THIS IS IT, CROCKETT!

CROCKETT...THERE'S A LOT I MEANT TO TELL YOU ONE DAY... NOW THERE'S NO TIME. YOU SEE THIS D.S.O. RIBBON? IT'S YOURS, CROCKETT... **YOURS!** THE IRONY OF WAR, THAT I SHOULD BE TEAMED UP WITH YOU AGAIN... **YOU!**

NONSENSE! WE'LL GET YOU OUT OF HERE!



THE MAJOR COUGHED IN A SUDDEN SPASM --AND JOE BENT TO CATCH HIS WORDS ...

TAKE IT EASY, MAJOR,
DON'T TALK ... I'LL
GET HELP!

NO...WAIT... I'VE
GOT TO TELL YOU.
I GOT THIS GONG
BECAUSE I WAS
THE **ONLY INFANTRY
OFFICER, OUT OF
ARRAS!** THEY THOUGHT
THAT I ORDERED YOUR
BATTALION TO STAY AND
SUPPORT THE TANKS ...
THEY SAID IT WAS ONE
OF THE THINGS THAT
MADE DUNKIRK POSSIBLE.
DIDN'T CONTRADICT
THEM...TOOK THE
CREDIT... ALWAYS
WAS A FRAUD AND
A LIAR ...

THE GONG IS YOURS, CROCKETT,
YOURS! RIP IT OFF! THE
BEST THING YOU EVER DID
WAS TO KNOCK ME OVER THE
HEAD -- SAVED MY LIFE!

THE PAST
IS FINISHED,
MAJOR -- FORGET
IT -- NOW I'M GOING
TO GET YOU OUT OF
HERE, IF IT'S THE
LAST THING I DO!

BUT AS JOE MADE TO LIFT THE DYING MAN IN HIS ARMS, THE MAJOR GATHERED HIMSELF TOGETHER, PUSHED THE ARM AWAY, AND SAT UPRIGHT ...

SERGEANT...YOU DISOBEYED AN ORDER BEFORE, AND I COULD HAVE HAD YOU COURT-MARTIALLED ~ DON'T DISOBEY THIS ORDER...GET OUT WHILE YOU HAVE THE CHANCE ... LEAVE ME ... THAT'S AN ORDER, I TELL YOU... AN ORDER ...



AND THEN MAJOR WILDE FELL BACK ~ AND THERE WAS SILENCE IN THE ROOM. JOE LEANED FORWARD AND WHEN HE FINALLY STOOD UP AND WENT TO THE DOOR, THERE WAS A SCRAP OF COLOURED RIBBON IN HIS HAND ...

I'M NOT TAKING THIS BECAUSE IT BELONGS TO ME ~ BUT BECAUSE IT WAS SOMETHING WE HAD IN COMMON, YOU AND I! YOU SAY THAT I EARNED IT BUT SO, AT THE END, DID YOU!



SERGEANT JOE CROCKETT WENT OUT ALONE INTO THE SHAMBLES THAT WAS THE MAIN STREET OF OLAVENAS, AND CONTINUED THE FIGHT ...

THE MAJOR HAS DIED FOR HIS COUNTRY ...

I AM SORRY ~ DEEPLY SORRY! HE WAS A GREAT MAN ~ AND HE INSPIRED US INTO ACTION! BUT THE WAR GOES ON ~ AND WE GO ON WITH IT! I HAVE LOST MANY COMRADES TODAY...



WHEN THIS IS OVER, POROPOULOS, WE WILL BE POORER, AND YET RICHER ~ IT IS A STRANGE PARADOX!

WHAT LAY IN THE FUTURE JOE DID NOT KNOW ~ BUT HE GOT OUT OF OLAVENAS ALIVE ~ AND HE WAS IN THE PARTISAN HIDE-OUT IN THE HILLS A WEEK LATER WHEN THE NEWS CAME ABOUT **ANZIO** ~ THE GREAT LANDING IN ITALY. IT WAS THEN THAT HE TOLD THE PARTISANS THE TRUTH ABOUT MAJOR WILDE'S MISSION ~ HOW ITS WHOLE OBJECT HAD BEEN TO MOVE A DIVISION TOWARDS GREECE, TO MAKE THE ALLIED TASK EASIER ...



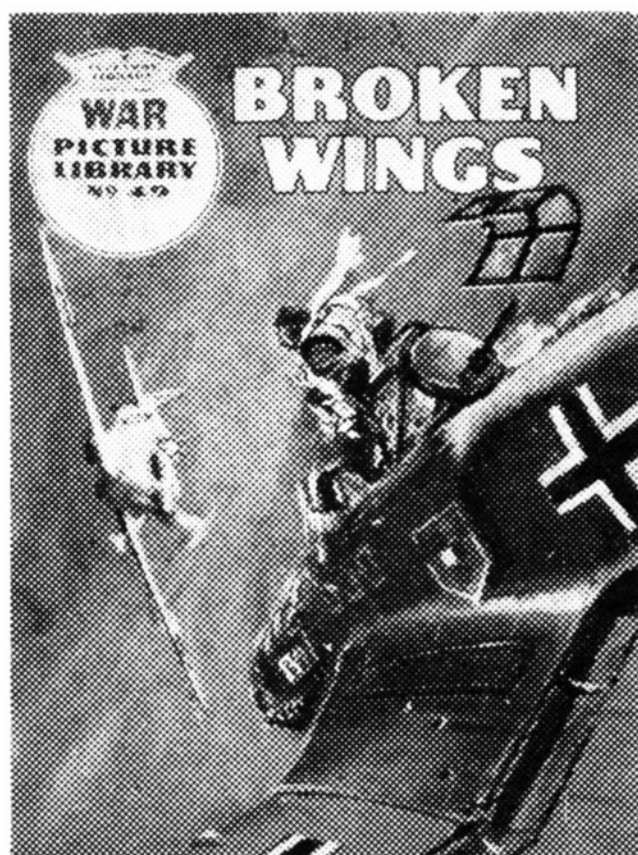
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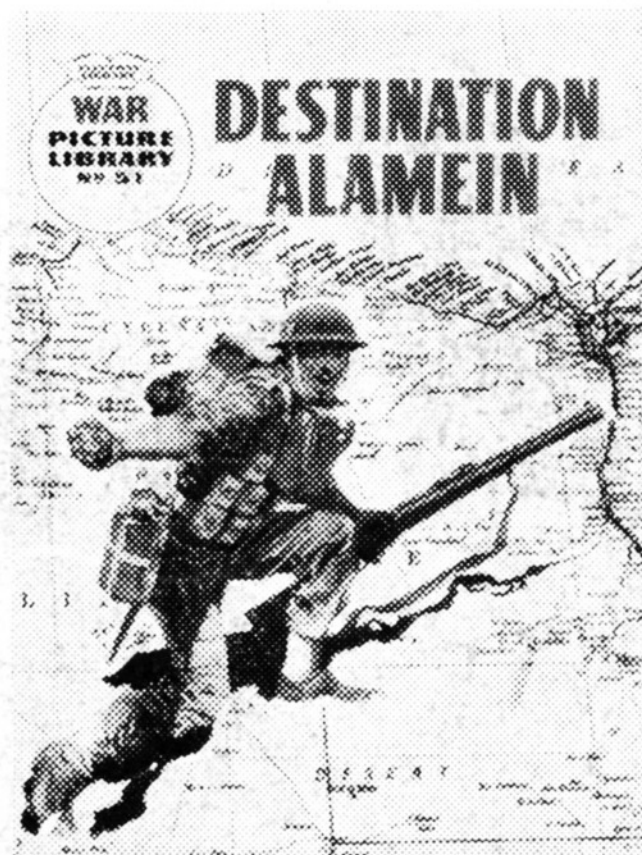
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